92-05532/

SUBJECT MATTER

CONTEMPORARY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

2 May to 12 July 1992

Robin Metcalfe, Guest Curator

Sponsored by Maritime Tel & Tel

Supported by the Exhibition Assistance Program of The Canada Council

---

David Atkin
Malcolm Callaway
Susan Tooke Crichton
Nyna Cropas

Thierry Delva
Nancy Edell
Suzanne Gauthier
Dennis Gill

John Greer
David Haigh
Harry Hamm
Alex Livingston

Teresa MacPhee
Marilyn McAvoy
Richard Mueller
Carl Zimmerman

SUBJECT / MATTER
Contemporary Painting and Sculpture in Nova Scotia

Printed in Canada
Copyright © 1992, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
ISBN: 0-88871-185-9

Published by the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Photography by Geri Nolan
Designed by PageCraft, Halifax
Printed by McCurdy Printing & Typesetting Limited, Halifax

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
P.O. Box 2262
1741 Hollis at Cheapside
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3C8

Text © 1992 Robin Metcalfe

Cover Illustration:
David Haigh
Gilgamesh thinks he will live forever, 1990
oil on canvas
101.6 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

CONTENTS

Director's Foreword 4

Sponsor's Foreword 5

Acknowledgements 6

The Analysis:

Subject / Matter 7
The Hero's Journey 9
The Valley of the Shadow 11
Snakes in the Grass 13
The Death of Magic 15
The Body of Work 16
The Uncertainty Principle 18
The Ransom of Beauty 20
Who Has Seen the Wind? 21

The Artists:

David Atkin 23
Malcolm Callaway 24
Susan Tooke Crichton 42
Nyna Cropas 43
Thierry Delva 45
Nancy Edell 46
Suzanne Gauthier 48
Dennis Gill 49
John Greer 51
David Haigh 53
Harry Hamm 54
Alex Livingston 56
Teresa MacPhee 58
Marilyn McAvoy 59
Richard Mueller 61
Carl Zimmerman 63

Bibliography 64
About the Curator 64

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Subject/Matter: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture in Nova Scotia represents our first major assessment of contemporary art making in the province since the *innovascotia* exhibition in 1985. The concept for the current exhibition as developed four years ago is intended to begin a series of exhibitions to assess the state of contemporary art in Nova Scotia in various media. The critical assessment of contemporary art is an important element in the mandate of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia; we welcome the opportunity to present the exhibition to Nova Scotians and to visitors in Nova Scotia. Following its installation at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the exhibition, which presents the work of ten painters and six sculptors, will tour throughout the province.

The selection process was a very important part of the overall exhibition project. Over two hundred artists throughout the province submitted slides and résumés to the Gallery. We wish to thank them all for their interest and involvement. The guest curator's final selection represents the specific thesis he has developed for this exhibition, but there could have been many different exhibitions selected from the superior body of work submitted by these many artists. Congratulations to all the artists and thanks to the lenders to the exhibition.

We are grateful to the corporate sponsor for providing generous financial support for this exhibition. Our longstanding relationship with Maritime Tel and Tel is one of which we are indeed proud. A frequent sponsor of our programs, Maritime Tel & Tel Limited also provides a yearly purchase award for acquisitions and has endorsed The Education Gallery on our lower level. My special thanks are extended to Ivan Duvar, President and Chief Executive Officer for Maritime Tel & Tel, and everyone in his organization who has assisted with the project.

We are especially pleased that The Canada Council has acknowledged this exhibition with financial support for which we are most grateful. The need for the Gallery to respond to current innovations and artistic initiatives throughout Nova Scotia is crucial to encourage the continuing growth and development of artists in this province and to provide our public with the apparatus for developing critical points of view. I know that you will find the works selected for *Subject/Matter* by guest curator Robin Metcalfe stimulating, provocative, and exciting.

It has been a rewarding experience for us to have the professional services of guest curator, Robin Metcalfe. His interaction with AGNS staff, the art community, and the public has been a great asset to the Gallery. Exhibitions Curator Susan Foshay has provided the overall co-ordination for this exhibition project, assisted by all the Gallery staff, and I want to express my personal thanks to them all. The successful completion of a project like this requires a team effort and the co-operation not only of the staff but also outside agencies. We are grateful to the designers and printers for their care and attention.

We are very proud of the achievements of artists in Nova Scotia and invite you to enjoy this exhibition and this catalogue.

Bernard Riordon
Director
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

SPONSOR'S FOREWORD

Maritime Tel & Tel is pleased to sponsor the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's exhibition of contemporary Nova Scotian painting and sculpture.

As a Nova Scotian company we are proud to be supporting and promoting the work of the province's artists, providing them with the opportunity to communicate their unique message through their art.

We welcome Nova Scotians to this exhibition which will be featured at the Gallery between 2 May and 12 July 1992.

Ivan E. H. Duvar
Chairman
President and C.E.O.
Maritime Tel & Tel
Halifax, Nova Scotia

MARITIME TEL & TEL

GUEST CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a project of this magnitude, many people's talents and efforts contribute to the final product. In acknowledging them, I can only hope to mention a fraction by name, but I hope all will know that their contributions have been appreciated.

To begin with, I would like to acknowledge the generous support this exhibition has received from the corporate sponsor, Maritime Tel & Tel, and from The Canada Council, and to thank the private individuals and public institutions that agreed to lend work from their collections.

It has been a pleasure to work again with the AGNS Exhibitions Curator, Susan Foshay. Her support and commitment have been the foundation on which I have built. I am grateful for her good humour, her patience and her faith, which I hope have finally, in this exhibition and in this catalogue, been rewarded.

It has been satisfying to work with the professional staff of the AGNS, especially on those many occasions when people have performed services above and beyond the call of duty, helping to make the difficult possible. I am endebted to the Gallery's Director Bernie Riordon, to Jean Addison, Manager, Development and Public Relations, to Education Curator Virginia Stephen, to Registrar Judy Dietz, to Secretary Karen Weir, to Preparator Pat Beauchamp, to Assistant Preparator Bruce Campbell, and to Photographer Geri Nolan.

A particular thanks is due to Adjunct Curator, Mora Dianne O'Neill, whose skills as an editor are accompanied by personal charm and a devilish wit. For any flaws that may be present in the text of this catalogue, I bear sole responsibility, but for those that are absent I must thank Dianne.

Most especially, I would like to thank all the artists for their patience, imagination and co-operation through the long process of bringing an exhibition such as this to fruition. The stimulating discussions I have had with them, and with many other artists whom I visited in the course of my research, have helped me to form the ideas expressed in this catalogue. In particular, I would like to thank John Greer, Nyna Cropas, Richard Mueller and Alex Livingston, several of whom provided me with useful reference material. For this, and for his thoughtful response to the draft of the catalogue essay, I am also indebted to Dennis Gill.

My thanks go also to Ian Muncaster of Zwicker's Gallery, for many helpful courtesies.

To my dear friend, Jim MacSwain, I owe more than I can say: for countless hours of listening to my half-formed ideas, for valuable advice, and for steadfast moral support.

Robin Metcalfe

SUBJECT MATTER

Subject / Matter presents the work of sixteen Nova Scotia artists: ten painters and six sculptors. Each artist is represented by several works, so that the viewer has a chance, in each case, not just to sample individual pieces, but to experience a body of work. ***Subject / Matter*** is also the first exhibition at the AGNS to make use of the forecourt for sculptural installation.

This exhibition originated with a general call for submissions, to which 214 artists responded. While painting was strongly represented in this group, sculpture was less so. To balance this, I invited submissions from two additional sculptors whom scheduling conflicts had dissuaded from responding to the original call. I eventually selected forty-five artists from across the province with whom to make follow-up studio visits. My final selection developed from this series of studio visits, which I conducted through the summer of 1991.

It is not my intention to present this exhibition as a general or comprehensive survey of contemporary Nova Scotian work in the media of painting and sculpture. The call for submissions, and the subsequent studio visits, gave me an invaluable opportunity to familiarize myself with a broad range of contemporary work in this province, but I never intended my selections to be broadly representative. Rather, I selected those artists whose current bodies of work engage me, and one another, in a dialogue about a particular set of ideas and concerns, which are explored in the text of this essay.

In bringing together the works that constitute this exhibition, I have been guided both by my conscious intellect and by my intuition. Often, I have only partially understood the reasons for my choices at the time of making them, or have come to understand them only through the process of making subsequent choices. In that way, assembling an exhibition is similar to making art.

Works of art always inhabit a particular context, one determined by choices about how they are displayed, described, identified. The ideal notion of the neutral gallery space can serve to mask a particular set of processes that tend to construct meaning.

This exhibition has a particular structure—the physical relationship between works, the sequence of spaces within the gallery—for which I, as curator, must take responsibility. Placed in a different context, these works may give rise to different interpretations. The interpretations suggested by this essay, and by the structure of the exhibition, are not necessarily more correct or authoritative than other possible interpretations: they are simply the ones that emerged from my own interaction with the work.

An exhibition changes the perceived meaning of a work of art. It may allow fertile new meanings to blossom, or it may thwart their development. It is startling to see how the status of a work of art changes once it enters the doors of a gallery. Most artists work in studios that are poorly heated and ventilated: the works of art come into being in an environment without effective controls on temperature, humidity, and light. Once it enters a gallery, however, an art work is handled as a precious object, one not to be exposed to conditions outside a narrowly controlled range—until the exhibition ends and it is returned to the same damp, dusty, draughty studio from which it originated.

A gallery will require that the artist assign the work a definite title, even if that title is *Untitled*. When a gallery documents a work of art in a colour photograph in a catalogue, it tends to fix that particular form of the work as its "true" or official form. Artists engage in a struggle to bring their work to a form that will present itself satisfactorily to an imagined audience. In the opinion of the artist, however, a given work may, in various forms, achieve that state several times—or never.

Experiencing a work of art requires one to question the assumptions that stand between oneself and the work. Making these assumptions visible, and questioning them, have been among the major focuses of twentieth-century artmaking.

A work of art is, among other things, an instrument for generating meanings, and questions about meanings. The role of an artist in relation to her work is less like that of designer than it is like that of a parent. The artist provides the conditions under which the work can emerge but does not have ultimate control over its meanings. Nor does a critic or curator

have the authority to define the meaning of a work. The critic or curator presents himself to the work and opens himself to the experience of it: to the possibility of being transformed by it. The critical text is a document of that experience, and a guide for fellow pilgrims.

◆◆◆

Subject: Matter. Matter is the subject of this inquiry, and we, the subjective rulers over the material world, we to whom all matter is subject, are ourselves matter, and subject to its limitations and its mysteries.

Subject / Matter constitutes an inquiry into the character of our present relations with matter and the material realm. The common etymological source of matter and mother, the material and the maternal, points to the origins of our present crisis: in the splitting of will from matter, consciousness from the unconscious, mind from body, male from female, human from nonhuman.

Each work of art is a complex juncture point of social, psychological, and material factors: the result of a creative dialogue with the ***material***, in the broadest sense of the word. Painting and sculpture rely strongly on the materiality of the art object, and on a direct relationship between it and the artist's (and the viewer's) body. Taken together, the works in this exhibition allow many angles of inquiry into the central question of materiality.

There is an equal emphasis to be placed on both the words that make up the title. The oblique, or slash, that separates them interrupts the progress of the reader's eye and draws it back to take a second look. It is ambiguous, permitting several possible relations between the two terms. The slash is a barrier, suggesting a discontinuity, even a struggle, between two opposing elements. But this oblique is also a seesaw, allowing an alternation of meanings and an alternation of priority, where first one, then the other is given prominence. Finally, this seesaw suggests the possibility of balance: a symmetrical relationship in which the two terms stand face-to-face like mirror reflections of one another.

◆◆◆

Consciousness is a wound that we are always seeking to heal. It is the child's discovery that he or she is no longer part of the mother's body, but alone. It divides the world into inside and outside, subject and object, self and other, me and it, us and them. The relationship between the self and the other can be a war or it can be a conversation. Too often, we have chosen the path of war, seeing as alien and other what is, in fact, our own reflection, our own lost self. We erect barriers around ourselves to keep that other out.

Subject / Matter consists of work that invites the viewer to look and to look again, that probes a rupture in the defensive wall of consciousness, some discontinuity in the smooth surface of our perceptions that tingles with discomfort or throbs with remembered pain. ***Subject / Matter*** enters into such ruptures and opens them up. Viewing this exhibition is not meant to be a comfortable exercise, but I hope it may be an enlightening and healing one.

While walking carelessly through sun-swept grasses,
Like Spring herself, with all her girls-in-waiting,
The bride stepped on a snake; pierced by his venom,
The girl tripped, falling, stumbled into Death.
Her bridegroom, Orpheus, poet of the hour,
And pride of Rhadope, sang loud his loss
To everyone on earth. When this was done,
His wailing voice, his lyre, and himself
Came weaving though the tall gates of Taenarus
Down to the world of Death and flowing Darkness
To tell the story of his grief again.[1]

The structure of this exhibition is based on the concept of the hero's underworld journey. It is a tale that exists in countless forms, in cultures throughout the world. In the Bible, it is the story of Jonah swallowed by the whale, and of Christ's harrowing of Hell between His death and resurrection. In classical Pagan myth, it is Orpheus's attempt to rescue his bride from the underworld, or the efforts of Demeter, goddess of the earth, to free her daughter Persephone from her abductor, Hades, god of death. It is the journey of the Sumerian hero, Gilgamesh to the land of no return after the death of his beloved companion Enkidu, and his plunge to the bottom of the bottomless sea to retrieve the flower of immortality. It is the descent of the goddess Ishtar or Inanna, to retrieve her dead lover Tammuz from Ereshkigal, her sister and ruler of the land of death. It is the night-sea journey, the dark night of the soul.

The most complete modern analysis of the hero's journey is Joseph Campbell's classic study, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.[2] Campbell identifies a standard sequence that constitutes the journey narrative, based on examples from European, Native American, Oceanian, Australian, Asian, and African cultures. The hero hears the call to adventure. The hero refuses, prevaricates, delays. The hero receives the help of a guardian figure. The hero crosses the first threshold, past the fearsome guardians of the gates, into the belly of the whale.

In the underworld, the land of death, the belly of the beast, the hero undergoes great trials and comes face to face with the parts of his psyche that he most fears. She encounters wonders that may tempt her to stay forever in the far land. For her courage, the gods offer to reward the hero with a gift or boon. Then he begins the return to the world from which he began his journey.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Human experience is full of such journeys. The journey of life itself, from womb to tomb, is an emergence from, and return to, the void. The cycle of the year is such a journey. Every winter, in her grief over the loss of her daughter, Demeter allows the fields to wither; every spring her joy at Persephone's return causes them to bloom again. Each night's passage through the ocean of dreams is a voyage in that shadow land where distinctions are not as clear as they seem to be in the bright daylight of consciousness.

The underworld is the land of death and the land of dreams. It is where we confront what we most fear, and discover what we most desire. It is the unconscious, the realm of the formless from which all forms emerge, and to which all forms return. It is the realm of transformations, where one thing becomes another, where life is renewed by shedding its old skin. It is the source of all creativity. It is the beginning of life, and it is death.

The hero's journey is also a metaphor for the process of artistic creation. To create, the artist must plunge repeatedly into the abyss of her own unconscious, and return with something she may find strange, wondrous, inexplicable, or frightening. The process of bringing that something into form involves an ongoing cycle of engagement with the unconscious, with the material of the medium, and with the critical, analytical intelligence that asks, What is this? What does it mean?

The hero is a hero by virtue of the journey. A challenging and sacred journey is a series of trials that test the traveller and force him to grow. This journey is far from the contemporary travel paradigm of tourism, and closer to the concept of pilgrimage. For the tourist, authenticity resides in the destination: one acquires value by having been in that place. For the pilgrim, authenticity resides in the journey itself: one acquires merit by having made the journey.

Contemporary tourism is an attempt to seize hold of the sacred; an attempt that is doomed to failure. By rendering travel swift, efficient, and comfortable, we negate its potential to transform the traveller. No surprises. As a sacred place becomes more accessible, it becomes less sacred—or, rather, its sacredness retreats from the traveller, becomes more evasive.

The passage of time required by a true pilgrimage allows commonplace concerns to drop away. It allows a separation from ordinary reality, a reawakening to wonder. Our impatient culture is addicted to a variety of quick fixes, that temporarily give the illusion of having attained the goal, without the inconvenience of having to make the journey. Drugs quickly alter one's state of consciousness. Jet travel delivers one quickly to one's destination. The spectacle of television, and of special effects, the hyperreality of theme parks; these offer a sudden jolt of wonder. The thrill is always less the second and third time, and we are left with a pervasive sense of *ennui*.

The faster we run, the more quickly our goal recedes from us. A work of art requires that we open ourselves to it, give it time to work its effect on us, allow it to soak in beyond the thick numbed layers of conventional perception. Only by submitting to the discipline of the pilgrim, the contemplative, the devotee, will we be able to approach the goal of reawakened vision.

1 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (trans. Horace Gregory), X , 8 - 17 (11 - 21 in translation)

2 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen Series XVII, 2nd ed (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973).

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow[1]

One of the central concepts of Jungian analysis, and one of the most useful to us in understanding the present crisis we find ourselves in, is the idea of the shadow. The shadow represents those parts of our own personalities that we have hidden from ourselves and from other people: the parts we reject, or are ashamed of, or fear; the parts we do not develop and honour. Each person has a personal shadow, and every culture has its own.

Robert Bly calls the shadow "the long bag we drag behind us",[2] into which we stuff the parts of ourselves that we don't want to own. The more we put in the bag, the heavier the burden we have to pull.

In Jung's model of personality development, people spend the first half of their lives defining who they are by deciding what to put in the bag. In the second half of life, the task facing anyone who continues to develop psychologically is to go into the shadow, and gradually to reintegrate shadow material into the whole personality. This process, called individuation, is one form of the underworld journey, for it involves descending into dark places where we have buried, and tried to forget, feelings and desires that we fear, or consider base and unworthy. Although we may repress those feelings and desires, they continue to have a life of their own. If we do not come to terms with them, they will erupt periodically in behaviour, or in physical symptoms, over which we have no conscious control.[3]

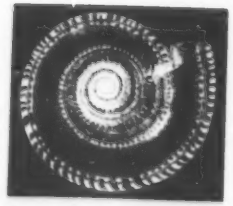
When we refuse to look at our own shadow directly, it falls on other people and we see it there. I always feel the strongest dislike for people who most resemble me, in ways that I'd rather not acknowledge. This process, called shadow projection, is also often the basis of our attraction to other people, such as our partners. Feeling loss, we long for those parts of ourselves that we do not experience directly. When we see them in another person, we are drawn to them. Often the two responses, attraction and repulsion, occur at the same time. Shadow projection is not always a negative thing: it can help us to recognize hidden parts of ourselves, often through the process of falling in love. But to be healthy, projection must move towards making shadow material conscious; towards integration.

Whole societies and cultures also engage in shadow projection. People who are different in race, gender, culture, or sexuality, often receive shadow projections, in the form of stereotypes. If the dominant culture values rationality and discipline over pleasure, for example, then it may portray a particular group as sensual, impulsive, and lazy. The stereotype expresses both contempt for those qualities, and envy. We may secretly want to be lazy ourselves; we suspect the others of having better sex lives. Stereotypes tell us much more about the people projecting them than they do about the people on whom they are projected.

The classic example of a society that has lost control to its own shadow projections is Nazi Germany. Nineteenth century German culture was highly literate, disciplined, rational, and emotionally and sexually repressed. To a greater extent than any other European country, it became possessed by Romanticism, with its emphasis on madness, impetuosity, and intense emotion. Through artists like Wagner, and particularly under Hitler, it resurrected deeply buried myth-structures, such as the legends of the Norse gods, and worshipped numinous archetypes like the swastika.

These myth structures and symbols, in themselves, are not evil. Under Nazism, however, a great flood of shadow material invaded a German culture that was not prepared to integrate it. Rather than embarking on a heroic journey to the underworld, to acknowledge and become conscious of its own fears, Nazism threw open the gates of the underworld and let unconscious forces inundate the world of consciousness.

The more successfully the shadow is repressed, the more energy it acquires, and the more potentially destructive it becomes. The fact that Germans were not ready collectively to integrate their shadow material is made clear by the frenzy of unconscious shadow projection they engaged in, with horrific results. Any group that could be made to bear shadow projections, most notably Jews, but also Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, socialists, and the disabled, were rounded up in concentra-



tion camps, neatly labelled with different coloured triangular badges, and marched off to the ovens or worked to death as slave labour.

The only way to avoid the destructive effects of unconscious shadow-projection is to become consciously aware of the process, and work to reclaim shadow material. Robert Bly calls this process "eating the shadow".[2] As the Nazi experience shows, there is danger in the shadow, but there is more danger in not coming to terms with it.

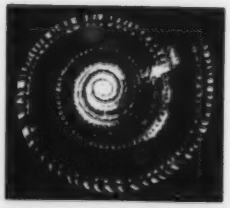
Subject / Matter concerns the way that Western culture has put the material world into the shadow. We have valued idea over matter, will over pleasure, and men over women—whom our culture identifies with the body, the senses, and the nonconscious material realm. The shadow, in itself, is neither good nor evil. If we label it as evil, however, it becomes hostile to us, and acquires great destructive power.

1 T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men", V, 78 - 82.

2 Robert Bly, *A Little Book on the Human Shadow*, ed. William Booth (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 17. This short, readable volume is perhaps the best introductory guide to the concept of the shadow.

3 For a concise overview of Jung's psychology, see Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*, rev.ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963).

4 Bly, 38 - 39, 42.



SNAKES IN THE GRASS

In the course of preparing this exhibition, I became aware that several of the artists I had selected had come, independently, to produce bodies of work involving a snake motif. This is what Carl Jung refers to as synchronicity: a meaningful coincidence.

I find it a hopeful sign that this image should be emerging now in the work of different artists. The snake is a rich symbol. Within Christianity, it is itself an emblem of shadow material. Asclepius, the Greek healer, was sometimes portrayed as a serpent, and a caduceus, or staff, twined with a single snake remains the emblem of the medical profession. In several traditions, including classical Paganism, the snake is associated with liminality, or passage over thresholds. Hermes, guardian of boundaries, and known to the Romans as Mercury, bears two snakes on his caduceus. A messenger god with wings on his heels, Hermes passes between the three worlds: heaven, earth, and the underworld. One of his roles is to guide souls to the Hereafter.[1] Our first guide, then, in this excursion to the underworld, is the serpent of Hermes.

The snake has from time immemorial been associated with Trickster gods, of whom Hermes, god of thieves, is one. It was a snake who stole the flower of immortality from Gilgamesh after he had retrieved it from the bottom of the bottomless sea. The snake's form symbolizes the sexually ambiguous, hermaphroditic nature of creation and procreation. At one moment phallic and essentially male, it then coils in upon itself, forming a circle around its eggs, and becomes essentially feminine. Many ancient and non-Western cultures have seen the snake as a propitious symbol of fertility.

Hermes is just one of the phallic Trickster gods of Indo-European tradition, and represents certain anarchic libidinal forces that were cast into the shadow as Western patriarchy began its slow climb towards the triumph of Logos, the rational will.[2] The version of classical Paganism (that of ancient Greece and Rome) that we have inherited, places Zeus/Jupiter (both names mean "bright sky father") as the ruler of all the other gods. There is evidence, however, not least in the myths themselves, that the Bright Sky Father came late to this position: that at an earlier period, the chief deities were a Mother Earth goddess and her male companion, a god of wine and of the wild places who continually died and was reborn. This god survives in various forms: particularly in Dionysos[3] and, in India, in the pre-Hindu god, Shiva.[4]

The ascendancy of the Bright Sky Father gods seems to correspond, historically, with the collapse of the (apparently nonpatriarchal) Minoan culture on the island of Crete, and the invasion of mainland Greece by northern tribes who became the Greeks of classical antiquity. The formerly dominant earth-based gods were demoted to secondary positions. (A similar shift occurs in the Norse pantheon.) Thus, for example, aspects of the earlier Earth Mother goddess survive in Demeter, whose name means "earth mother". The Trickster gods—Hermes, and his Norse counterpart Loki—were made subservient to the Bright Sky Father gods—Zeus and Odin.[5]

The ascent of the Bright Sky Father gods within classical Paganism was a first stage in the development of Western patriarchy. The second corresponded to the rise of Christianity. Here the Trickster was rendered wholly evil, a demon, and consigned to Hell, along with his companion, the snake, who had tempted Eve with the fruit of sensuality.

A more curious fate met Dionysos, who was split into two. Many of his aspects reappear in the figure of Christ Himself. Both Christ and Dionysos were born to mortal mothers, of divine fathers. Both are associated with miracles involving wine; both are male deities who seem particularly sympathetic to women; both experience death, and return from the underworld to be reborn. Those aspects of Dionysos, however, that do not appear in Christ, have gone, literally, to the Devil: his horns, his connection with wild animals, his sensuality. The severing of Dionysos into two parts, one divine and one diabolical, is a classic example of shadow formation.

The more you give to the shadow, the more you yourself become diminished.[6] Nevertheless, both classical Paganism and Christianity contain powerful myth structures that offer means to achieve integration. Both continue to honour the Earth Mother, albeit in a secondary role (within

Catholicism, in the form of the Virgin Mary), and both provide routes to the underworld. At some point in Western history, however, these myth structures seemed to lose their vitality. Our great religious truths faded into unconvincing fables: symbols without spiritual substance for most people in the culture. That point corresponded with the rise of Science. As Logos triumphed over the material world, we severed more of our connections with the earth, and lost contact with our own buried strengths.

1 Hermes is known in this role as the "psychopomp." See, for example, Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Gods in Everyman: A New Psychology of Man's Lives & Loves* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 169 - 170.

2 It is a common but profound mistake to view the phallus as simply an emblem of patriarchy. Representation of the phallus is patriarchy's greatest taboo, but the power of this taboo derives, not from reverence, but from fear. The phallus, emblem of the primal masculine, arises from the body, from the very material world that patriarchy disdainfully views as feminine and Other, and on which patriarchy seeks to impose its alienated will. Patriarchy bases its sense of meaning, and its pride, on the triumph of will over matter, of mind over body, of self over other, of man over woman, and of humans over the nonhuman world. The phallus represents an earth-based source of masculine identity, one not wholly subject to conscious control. For a more complete analysis of the iconography of the phallus, see Eugene Monick, *Phallus: Sacred Image of the Masculine* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1987).

3 I have followed Arthur Evans in preferring this spelling of the god's name over the latinized "Dionysus", to emphasize the god's archaic origins. For the initial hostility of Roman authorities to the worship of Dionysos, see Arthur Evans, *The God of Ecstasy: Sex-Roles and the Madness of Dionysos* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), ch. V.

4 Evans, 129 - 136.

5 For a general discussion of how the Bright Sky Father gods supplanted the earlier earth-based deities, and in particular Dionysos, see Evans.

6 Bly, 36 - 38.

THE DEATH OF MAGIC

...I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did every plummet sound
I'll drown my book.[1]

In the last act of *The Tempest*, the great sorcerer Prospero renounces his occult powers as he prepares to return from his enchanted isle, to resume his worldly role as the Duke of Milan. His language expresses the psychological character of his renunciation. He will "bury" his staff, and "drown" his book: metaphors for repression, for the forceful return of unwanted material to the unconscious. In renouncing his staff, he detaches himself from the phallus, that tricksy and ungovernable member that partakes of the ambiguous character of all matter.

Prospero anticipates that moment in Western history when the mythically oriented culture of Medieval Europe gave way to the rationalist world view that would produce the scientific revolution. At the centre of that revolution was the separation of the modern experimental sciences of chemistry and physics from the mediaeval practice of alchemy.

Alchemy has an ancient history with antecedents in the Egyptian resurrection cult of Osiris. Its patron god was Hermes, the Olympian phallic Trickster god, the intermediary between worlds who guided souls to the land of shades. Alchemists applied his Roman name, Mercury, to that most ambiguous of metals, the only one they knew to remain liquid at room temperature. In its fluidity they found a symbol of the powers of transformation over which they hoped to gain mastery, for the goal of the alchemists was to transform lead into gold: the immortal metal that does not corrode.

It is an ambition that our age views with condescending scorn. We think we know better, of course, having mastered the periodic table of the elements and imposed our will on the physical world through technology. Modern experimental science acknowledges a grudging debt to alchemy, whose practitioners developed the hardware of the modern laboratory. The official histories of heroic science, however, view alchemy with embarrassment and distaste, as one might a dotty forebear whom the family had confined in the attic.

The work of C. G. Jung, however, has proposed a re-evaluation and rehabilitation of alchemy. The literalist mindset of modernism, he argues, has blinded us to the symbolic riches of alchemy as a tradition of philosophical inquiry. Alchemical literature is full of mythic motifs of psychological development, including the underworld journey, the death of the old self, and the marriage of masculine and feminine within the psyche, all of which constitute parts of the process of integration.

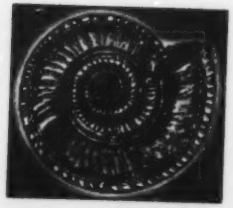
At the beginning of the passage from which I have quoted above, Prospero calls upon "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves", those "that / By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make" and "whose pastime / Is to make midnight mushrooms". He summons these accomplices in magic in order to dismiss them forever from his company. In doing so, Prospero speaks for Western culture, dismissing the animate view of nature, the perception of the world as a place alive with spirits.

In the split between alchemists and chemists, the chemists abjured the search for philosophical gold, the symbol of the integrated self, to seek the gold of this world. In that ambition, they succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. Like King Midas, we have been damned with the complete fulfilment of our prayers. Like him, we now find that all things we touch—the living forests and rivers, our fellow animate creatures—have turned into dead lumps of cash, and that we have killed the source of our greatest joy. At the troubled end of this millennium, who can now say with any confidence that it was the alchemists, and not our triumphant rationalist culture, that ended up with fool's gold?

"The gods only laugh," says the Japanese proverb, "when men pray for wealth."[2]

1 William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, V, 1, 54 - 7

2 Joseph Campbell, 189.



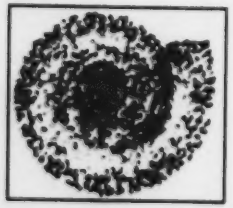
THE BODY OF WORK

The logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material.[1]

Ever since Marcel Duchamp submitted a commercially manufactured urinal as a work of art to a 1917 exhibition in New York, a major concern of the art of this century has been to explore and to challenge the processes of signification. How a given object comes to be identified as art, how the viewer reads the object, and how that reading is determined by the language of signs within which the viewer is embedded: in the past two decades in the West, these questions have moved into the forefront of critical art thinking and practice. The kind of analysis that Rosalind Krauss proposes, in the essay from which I have quoted above, represents part of this broad trend, an attempt to expand the field of discourse.

Commenting specifically on the practice of sculpture, Krauss argues that "within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium—sculpture—but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium—photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself—might be used."[2]

"Logical operations", "terms", "reading", "discourse"—the vocabulary of postmodernist critical theory is all about language. Its foundations were laid by a postwar generation of French theorists who examined linguistics from psychoanalytical and feminist perspectives.[3] Krauss, like many of her peers, treats the material as one term in a syntactical construction: a verbal unit, a word in a sentence constructed by the artist. The act of making art remains, but there is a danger in such a theoretical approach that the material presence of the art object may collapse into a flat exchange of signs.



Duchamp's urinal and other "ready-mades" established that one cannot assume a material connection between the artist and the object—whatever its medium. The artist may, for example, hire other people to carry out her instructions. This reduces the ethic of craft to a respect for an engineering competence, a theoretical mastery of information relevant to the technical qualities of the material.

Inasmuch as it focuses on the *construction* of meaning, using linguistic models, postmodernism thus privileges Logos over Eros. It shifts critical attention away from the sort of spontaneous creation that arises from nonconscious physical activity based on an intimate connection with the material, from accidental discoveries and slips of the hand.

Postmodernism positions itself in opposition to modernism: a critique that, to use the relevant jargon, "problematizes" modernism. It constitutes, in particular, a challenge to the formalism of modernist critics such as Clement Greenberg. While aspects of modernism are certainly a problem, the qualities that it shares with postmodernism are at least as numerous as those that separate them.

In this contest between like things, modernist formalism supposedly stands in defence of the material qualities of the object. It is a distanced defence, however. Modernism validates those formal qualities that appeal to Logos: to the detached, analytical intelligence. Thus the triumph of abstract art in the modernist period: an art capable of sustaining a sufficiently cool, unemotional response that the dominant corporations of the 1950s could appropriate it to decorate their headquarters.

Both modernism and postmodernism (within critical art theory) are suspicious of any direct appeal to sensuous pleasure, to the desire for beauty, and to emotions that manifest themselves in the body. Postmodernism has mounted a critique of modernism's ideal categories, and has challenged their authority and supposed neutrality, but it, like modernism, remains rooted in Logos. It expresses its critique of linguistic structures in linguistic terms: that is, from within those very structures. The term "postmodern" is itself derivative. It locates itself in relation to modernism, rather than in terms of an alternative program. Unable to gain sufficient distance from the object of critique, it often falls into frustration and despair, assuming that the totalizing effects of the dominant culture are inescapable, and can only be described, not resisted.[4]

If language is the dominant metaphor in contemporary art criticism, postmodernist art practice may aspire to the condition of poetry. In poetry, the sensuous presence of the word is just as important as its function as a

sign. Words are material: they are formed by the pressure of tongue and lips, by vibrating columns of air emanating from the diaphragm. They represent *spirit* in its most literal form, as breath. Even in printed form, they have a sensuous, material presence—as any concrete poet knows. Contemporary visual art that achieves a "poetic" quality thus involves an attentiveness to the material and to the way that the work emerges in relation to the artist's, and the viewer's, body.

Art is more than "logical operations on a set of cultural terms," although it may also be that. The relationship between the artist and the material—and between the viewer and the art object—is not only logical: it is also erotic. It inhabits both the ideal universe of terms, and the material universe of the senses. The intimacy of a sustained relationship with a given medium makes possible a range of interactions on a nonverbal level that are often the means whereby the unconscious makes itself known.*

1 Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", in Hal Foster, ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 41.

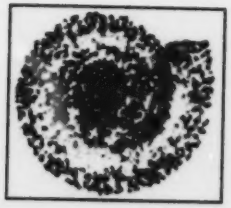
2 Ibid.

3 "Postmodern" and "postmodernist", referring to events that are presumedly still in process, are necessarily imprecise terms, most often used to identify whatever straw horse a particular speaker wishes to beat. In my usage, "postmodernist" denotes a particular critical stance in relation to modernism. The ideas of postmodernism, as they have currency in contemporary Canadian art writing and practice, are summarized in Walter Klepac, "The Postmodern Catechism: or Why Art Criticism is So Hard to Read", *Canadian Art* 8, No 4 (Winter 1992): 15 - 17. Klepac, of course, has his own straw horse to beat, and, as he himself makes clear, his summary is of the *received* wisdom of postmodernism, and is not meant to comprehend the range of theoretical positions from which it has been derived.

4 These include Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva.

5 Thus Terry Graff, writing about Michael Lawlor's photographs, states that "...they suggest the possibility of understanding, if not resisting, the persuasiveness and nullifying effects of global mass-media communications." Terry Graff, "Michael Christopher Lawlor: Landscape, Garden, Kitchen", *ArtsAtlantic* 42 (Winter 1992): 30.

6 Susan Sontag tantalizingly invokes the name of Eros at the very end of her famous 1964 essay, "Against Interpretation". Its final sentence reads, "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art." Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation", in *Against Interpretation* (New York: Delta, 1979), 14.



THE UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Semiotics nearly spoiled their first day.[1]

Boswell: It is impossible to refute it...
[Bishop Berkeley's proof of the non-existence of matter]
Johnson, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, answered, "I refute it thus."[2]

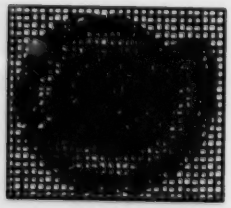
Art in this century, like society in general, has experienced a crisis of meaning. Within art, the crisis has been most acute in relation to representation. The question of what, if anything, an image *means* seems to have grown very complex and problematic.

Modernism skirted this dilemma by largely abandoning representation and concentrating its attention on the art object as a thing in itself. Postmodernism recognizes that the relationship between a representation and the thing represented is problematic: it is always a kind of fiction. Any attempt to correct this with a more accurate representation is doomed to failure, because that only constitutes another fiction. Postmodernism thus approaches representation with deep cynicism and irony. It attends to the act of ***representation*** as a thing in itself.

Despite these problems, however, and a long period of unfashionability, artists continue to be drawn to representation.[3]

Walter Klepac has broadly summarized the main elements of postmodernist criticism, as manifested in Canadian art writing. His list begins with the following assertions.

> The self is a metaphysical fiction and a rhetorical construction. It has neither a centre, unity, coherence nor continuity of its own.
> There is no transcendent symbolic dimension to human existence.
> There is no "depth" to knowledge, experience or appearances, nor is there "depth" to psychological phenomena or to language: there is only the surface of signs.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> All discourse consists entirely of narratives. The institution of the "master narrative" is an outdated fiction.[4]



It is curious that the death of the subject[5] has been proclaimed precisely at the historical moment when those who were traditionally denied the status of complete persons—working people, women, people of colour, gay men, and lesbians—have asserted their existence as autonomous subjects. Whereas the postmodernist critique has provided important theoretical tools for those very communities in their efforts to analyse and to challenge the construction of meaning in patriarchal culture, the notion of "the death of the subject" places them in a dilemma. One lesbian historian responded to it by making the following facetious offer to white heterosexual men: "I'll deconstruct if you deconstruct first".[6]

Solipsism traditionally has been the philosophical position that the self is the only thing that can be known and verified. Modernism was prone to a kind of solipsism, fixated on the isolated, heroic individual, and the autonomous work of art. Postmodernism goes one better, by asserting that even the self is a fictional construct. All that can be known and verified—and analysed at length in art magazines—is the text. We could call this new position ***textual solipsism***—or should we call it post-solipsism?

It is tempting to fall back on Dr Johnson's proof, and to refute the whole argument with a good sound kick. The temptation is particularly strong when we encounter one of the denser and more incomprehensible postmodernist texts, where there may indeed appear to be no meaning beyond the surface of signs.

But let us resist the temptation to dismiss postmodernism. Let us, rather, see if we can dislodge it from the dilemma it has gotten itself into.

◆◆◆

The fact that something is a metaphysical fiction does not mean that it isn't true.

When we wish to say that something has no truth value, we often dismiss it as a "fairy tale". "Fairy tale", "myth", and "fantasy" are terms that have acquired pejorative meanings, and have come to be synonymous with falsehood. In Jungian analysis, however, particularly as developed by

Marie-Louise von Franz,[7] the fairy tale is an archetypal narrative drama of the soul's journey towards self-knowledge and integration.

The problem is to distinguish between two orders of truth: literal and mythic. Narratives are not transcriptions of life, but rather dramatizations. They are symbolic systems for making sense of personal experience. Their truth is mythic in nature.

The meaning of myth cannot be fixed: neither can it be exhausted. Any analysis can only operate along some of the axes of meaning, and is never more than partial. Myths must be evaluated, ultimately, not for their truth in a literal sense, but for their use value in helping us to live and to grow towards wisdom and wholeness.

A misunderstanding of the nature of mythic truth lies at the heart of both the spiritual bankruptcy of Western rationalism and the frightening rise of religious fundamentalism (whether of Christian, or Islamic, or any other variety). Fundamentalism, craving certainty, treats mythic truth as if it were literal. It is uncomfortable with the unconscious, and with the paradoxical and apparently contradictory signals whereby it expresses itself.

Rationalism, on the other hand, condescends to mythic truth. It dismisses mythic narratives as mere charming folklore; it makes allowances for art as a personal expression of Bohemian eccentricity. It does not honour either as a source of knowledge that is vital to our survival.

Physics, arguably the most advanced branch of Western thought, has recognized that experience does not sit still for us to name and to measure it precisely. Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle established that an observer can determine either the position or the momentum of a subatomic particle, but not both. The more one knows about one, the less one knows about the other.[8] In a century when physics has begun to speak of electrons as clouds of probability, and matter as a disturbance in space, we might do well to consider the limits of what we can know and say on the order of literal truth.

We are challenged today to establish an uncertainty principle in all our fields of endeavour—religious, cultural, social, ecological—and thus to avoid the destructive *hubris* of believing we can know anything perfectly. Technical expertise is not enough to resolve the problems we presently face. What we need now is wisdom, which comes from neither literal nor mythic truth alone, but from knowing how to combine and balance the two.[9]

The death of the subject that postmodernism mourns can perhaps be better seen as the death of a certain concept of the subject, as an autonomous being separate from other subjects and superior to the world of matter. Beyond that alienated, Logos-bound ego lies, neither an empty void, nor a mere surface of signs, but a deeper Self. To know that Self requires that we be able to think in mythic terms.

1 A. S. Byatt, *Possession* (London: Vintage, 1991), 251.

2 James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, 6 Aug 1763.

3 For a thoughtful examination of some of these issues, in the context of Nova Scotian painting, see Ron Shuebrook, "The Persistence of Representation: Some Issues, Some Identities", *ArtsAtlantic* 15 (Fall 1982): 20 - 26.

4 Klepac, 16.

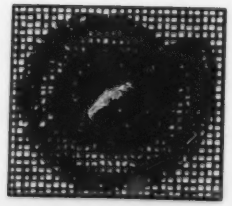
5 For one discussion of the "death of the subject," see Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", in Hal Foster, ed, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 114 - 115.

6 My memory attributes this quip to Esther Newton, speaking on a panel on the "Uses of History in Contemporary Debates", during *Sex and the State: Gay and Lesbian History Conference*, Toronto, 6 July 1985.

7 Marie-Louise von Franz, *Individuation in Fairy Tales*, rev. ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 1991).

8 Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (New York: William Morrow, 1979), 52.

9 A delightfully simple and cogent presentation of the limits of rationalism or "nominalism" as he calls it, is Alan W. Watts, *The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (New York: Collier Books, 1967).



THE RANSOM OF BEAUTY

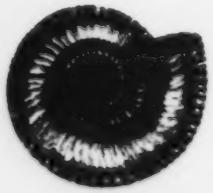
Every aesthetic innovation is an attempt at the restoration of desire.[1]

The culture of consumption beguiles our senses continually with beautiful surfaces, promising the fulfilment of our desires.[2] Postmodernism has responded to this situation in a way that at times recalls the response of Calvinism to the corrupt excesses of the Roman church. Beauty, so often a means of seduction and deception, has been suspect in art.

The desire for beauty, however, inevitably asserts itself. It is what Donald Kuspit calls "a necessary illusion, luring life on,"[3] but it "can never be fully communicated".[4] In terms of the myth of the underworld journey, the search for immortality must always, ultimately, fail. The goal can only be attained within the mysterious realm of myth and the unconscious; any attempt to carry the flower of immortality back to the world of literal reality can only result in failure. Eurydice is always lost at the last moment, just when her bridegroom turns to smile on her; Persephone is condemned to spend six months of each year in Hades as the bride of Death; Gilgamesh must fall asleep just when the means of immortality is in his grasp, and awake to find his treasure swallowed by the snake.

If the libido's desire to live forever cannot be satisfied, there is in the symbolism of the snake a key to reconciling the conflicting demands of love and death. In the Gilgamesh legend, the snake, upon swallowing the plant of immortality, acquires the ability to rejuvenate itself by shedding its skin. It transcends death, not by enduring forever in unchanged form, but by constantly changing, by endlessly being transformed. It is only by continually dying (and being ever reborn) that we may continue to live.

For the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, to live forever is a dreadful calamity, a wheel of sorrows on which we slowly turn, a prison from which we may escape only through enlightenment. The conflict between the busy, tortured world of desires and the great void of death to which that world returns is resolved within Buddhism, however, by the Bodhisattvas. Having attained enlightenment, they nevertheless remain in the world of the living, recognizing that the two states of being are the same, the difference between them only a temporal illusion.



The form of the snake is that of the spiral, a circle—or cycle—moving through time and space. The spiral, or helix, is the shape of life, a circle that returns continually to its source, but always on a different level, always in a different form, never exactly the same, except in its essence.

◆◆◆

The loved one dies and passes into the underworld. The hero follows in pursuit; passes the fearful guardians of the first threshold, into Hamlet's "undiscovered country" of death and of the unconscious. There one endures difficult trials, encounters marvellous beings, and penetrates to the heart of darkness to meet those wonderful and terrible gods, the hidden archetypes of one's own unconscious. If one survives and passes the trials, the gods reward one with a boon, a gift to take back to the upper world. Gilgamesh sought eternal life; Orpheus sought his bride; Demeter sought her daughter. Each saw the prize slip from his or her hands, for unconscious material can never survive intact the transition into consciousness. Our desire is never perfectly fulfilled. Nevertheless, something precious remains, some residue of the journey: a marvellous story for Gilgamesh, Orpheus's sad gift of song, Persephone's cyclical release from death in the annual return of summer. For the artist, the gift or boon is the artwork: never enough, never what was asked for or what was expected, and yet a source of deep satisfaction, even as it calls us back to brave the dangers of the underworld once more, to dive again for the treasure left behind.

1 Donald Kuspit, "Art and the moral imperative", *New Art Examiner* 16 (Jan 1991): 23. Kuspit's article is useful for its analysis of the psychology of a certain kind of pleasure-denying political moralism. By referring to it by the general term "activist art", however, he paints with a rather broad brush. His argument must be considered within the context of the general attack that has been launched recently against "political correctness", a critique that uses a quite valid protest against totalitarian tendencies on the left as a cover for a neoconservative attempt to discredit the entire critique of privilege posed by those on the margins.

2 Herbert Marcuse describes the manipulation of desire as a means of social control, which he labels "repressive desublimation", in *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

3 Kuspit, 23.

4 Ibid, 24.

WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND?

There are many factors that influence the way a particular curator responds to the work that he or she encounters. The experiences of class, education, race, gender, and sexuality all have their effects in shaping perception. I suspect, however, that one of the most important factors influencing how this curator sees things is the fact that for the past twenty years he has lived without a television set.

At times I have feared that this might seriously impair my ability to function as an art critic. So much of contemporary art is concerned with analysing the ways that the mass media construct images and narratives. In selecting work for this exhibition, I have been less concerned with such critical deconstruction—however important it may be—than with awakening a different mode of response in the viewer, one that is more direct and operates strongly on the unconscious level.

◆◆◆

The mass media present an enveloping world of sounds and images, a world that offers constant diversion, gratification, spectacle, a world that eliminates silence.

The quality of experience provided by the electronic media is determined less by the content of the sounds and images, than by their physical character. This experience comes in two basic varieties. The first is a sense of excitement, of something that seems always about to happen. The images flicker rapidly and change constantly, catching the eye like a shiny lure. The sounds are sharp and loud and fast. They have a harsh, driving, urgent beat. They say that we are on our way, we are almost there, that what we desire is waiting for us just around the corner, down at the Mall, at the Metro Centre this Saturday night. This is the quality of experience most typical of commercial radio and television. It always sounds best when one is driving in a fast car.

The second experience is typical of recorded music in shopping malls. It is soothing, lulling, narcotizing. It says that we are here now, that we have arrived in the paradise of the Mall, that everything we want is within reach. We can go to sleep now, like an infant at the mother's breast.

Neither experience is conducive to being alert to one's immediate environment, or to a state of true serenity. Neither produces a sense of presence in the here and now.

Everyone in the same Mall, or tuned to the same station, hears the same thing at the same time; is synchronized to the same rhythm. Even when members of the audience are making fun of the programming and proposing alternative readings, they are inducted by its physical effects into a common emotional and perceptual state. At times of crisis and of great collective emotion, the mass media can produce a profound experience of sharing. Most of the time, however, they serve to keep people from drifting into anomalous private states of perception.

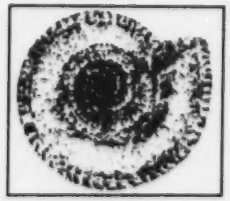
Like the armies of a foreign power, television keeps your mind occupied.

To a person who does not have a television, it is astonishing how much it dominates human conversation, and how much in those conversations is assumed. People do not say, Did you see the Prime Minister speak on television? They ask, Did you see Mulroney last night? To see something is to see it on television.

◆◇◆

Imagine a human community living together in the kind of silence that existed before recorded images and sound. Whatever human noises people heard, were made by themselves, their families, their co-workers. If anyone heard a song, it was because someone nearby was singing. If someone followed the adventures of a hero, it was because he or she was in the presence of a narrative painting or sculpture, or was reading a book, or because someone nearby was telling a story. People sang together and told stories as they worked together at the loom, in the kitchen, in the fishing boats, in the fields, on the threshing floor. Aside from such songs and stories, many people spent a large part of their time in silence and solitude.

What would they hear? They'd hear the mouse scratching at the grain in the pantry. The wind in the grass. The goats bleating. A fly beating at the window. The logs crackling and shifting in the stove.



What did they see, when there were no bus shelter advertisements, no television, no movies or video, no glossy full-colour magazines?

They saw cloud patterns. The way leaves shake and darken before a storm. An ant lugging a dead beetle. Daylight falling on the same window sill at a different angle, in a slightly different colour and intensity, from hour to hour, day to day, season to season, year to year.

In this world of silence, when two people met, they would compare what they had seen and heard. I saw gulls in the high field. I saw the brown stone where the river level has fallen. I can feel a wind coming. It will be a dry summer. The strawberries will be good this year. The capelin will be running soon.

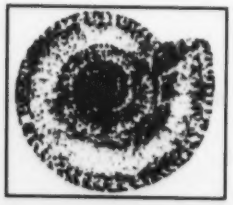
And what do we say to each other now when we meet, as we pull our earphones off?

Did you see...? Did you see Oprah yesterday? Did you see the space shuttle? Did you see Michael Jackson's new video?

Meanwhile, the wind is rising, but who has heard it? The storm is coming, but who has seen?

◆◆◆

We will never return to a world without radio, without photography and reproduced images and recorded sound. Nor is such a thing, in itself, desirable. To keep our wits about us, however, when our attentions are constantly solicited by seductive media, requires more than an ability to deconstruct their messages. It requires that we know how to be present in solitude and silence. Only then can we see and hear, can we open ourselves to experience a work of art—or, for that matter, the world, or our own bodies. The artists whose work is gathered here have looked at their world and listened to it, in solitude and silence. Let us attend to what they have seen and heard.



DAVID ATKIN

BORN 1967 Toronto, Ontario

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION

1990 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 Parson's School of Design, New York
1988 Cooper Union, New York
1988 Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Ontario
1986 Etobicoke School of the Arts, Toronto, Ontario

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990 *Paintings*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 *Picture Window*, OO Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *The August Show*, Green Lantern Building, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 Other Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 Andrew Ross Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1988 *A Long Sentence About Figures and Dwellings*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

The works of David Atkin participate in a recent period of restoration of painting, an unabashed celebration of its formal and sensuous properties. After two decades in which the medium was held under suspicion at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the work of recent graduates, such as Atkin, asserts once again the sheer pleasure of mucking about with paint.

Atkin's method is, at the same time, a recapitulation of Western art history through selective appropriation. His paintings from 1989 to 1990 are a kind of midden where he deposits layers of quotations, scraps of Cézanne and Matisse intermingling with Caravaggio and Roman wall painting. One can also detect the influence of two of Atkin's teachers, Alex Livingston and Gerald Ferguson.

To carry the metaphor further, one could call his work a *kitchen* midden, for Atkin's art history fragments are often taken from still lifes of food. One particularly striking work from 1990 is called *Feast*, and features the sort of dead rabbits, pheasants, and cuts of beef one would expect to find piled on the groaning board of the sixteenth or seventeenth century Dutch domestic still life.

Such an image appeals to the sensuous life of the appetites, while also functioning as a *memento mori*. The midden is a place where new life springs from the decaying forms of what has gone before. Atkin's compositions participate in this process on two levels. They represent living things—fruit, flowers, animals—at the climactic moment of life, which is also the moment of death and the moment when they become food for new life. At the same time, Atkin the painter generates new forms from the rich compost of art historical references.

In *Still Life with Teacup and Snake*, small pockets of conventional representation contain vegetables, gourds, or bowls of fruit, rendered in volumetric form. Among these, Atkin weaves a network of broad, gestural strokes, and overlays parts of the painting with skeletal outline forms reminiscent of stencils. The surface is a dense field of visual events, a sort of voluptuous storm without centre or boundaries.

Atkin's more recent work has moved towards a stronger sense of overall order. The profusion of marks in *Celebration Painting II*, obliterating earlier marks, have composed themselves into a vaguely animate form, like matter congealing in a gas cloud.

Atkin continues to draw references from the history of painting, but in *New Yellow Garden*, his appropriations, rather than being floating fragments, tend to inform overall composition and colour balance. This painting had its genesis in borrowings from a work by Bonnard. In the process of execution, Atkin departs substantially from his model, but without totally effacing the sense of kinship.

The dark red shape in the lower right portion of *New Yellow Garden* represents a pomegranate, a fruit noted since classical times for its resemblance to a bloody heart. It was also an emblem of the marriage contract.[1] By sealing Persephone's obligation to remain with Hades in the underworld, it has become as well a symbol of death. Like Demeter bargaining for the restoration of her daughter, these paintings argue for a renewed valuing of beauty, of its power to move us and to deepen our experience of both the sweetness and sorrow of life.

1 *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (London: Prometheus Press, 1968), 152 - 155.

WORKS

Still Life with Teacup and Snake, 1990
oil on canvas
121.5 x 92.2 cm
Collection of the Artist

Celebration Painting II, 1991
oil on canvas
96.6 x 124.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

New Yellow Garden, 1992
oil on canvas
113.7 x 106.2 cm
Collection of the Artist

Welcome, 1992
diptych, oil on canvas
121.8 x 203.3 cm (left panel 121.8 x 89.0 cm; right panel 121.8 x 114.2 cm)
Collection of the Artist

MALCOLM CALLAWAY

BORN 1951 Plympton, England

RESIDES Chester

EDUCATION
1968 Victoria School of Art, Victoria, British Columbia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1990 Hollis Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1986 Duke of Argyle Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1983 Gallery 1667, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1989 Manuge Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 Domtar Exhibition, Toronto, Ontario
1984 Gallery Gabor, Toronto, Ontario
1983 *Nudes in Canadian Painting*, Pagurian Gallery Toronto, Ontario (national travelling exhibition)
1983 Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland

COMMISSIONS
1983 Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
1983 Oland Breweries Limited, Halifax, Nova Scotia

COLLECTIONS
Bank of Montreal
Bank of Nova Scotia
CN Marine
IMASCO
Mercantile Bank
Newfoundland Tel & Tel

Malcolm Callaway is the Trickster of this collection of artists, fond of outrageous verbal and visual puns. His high realist images display both a merry wit and a sharp satirical bite. Where many high realists favour the slick and the banal, Callaway serves up shadow material in a glossy package, and lets us squirm.

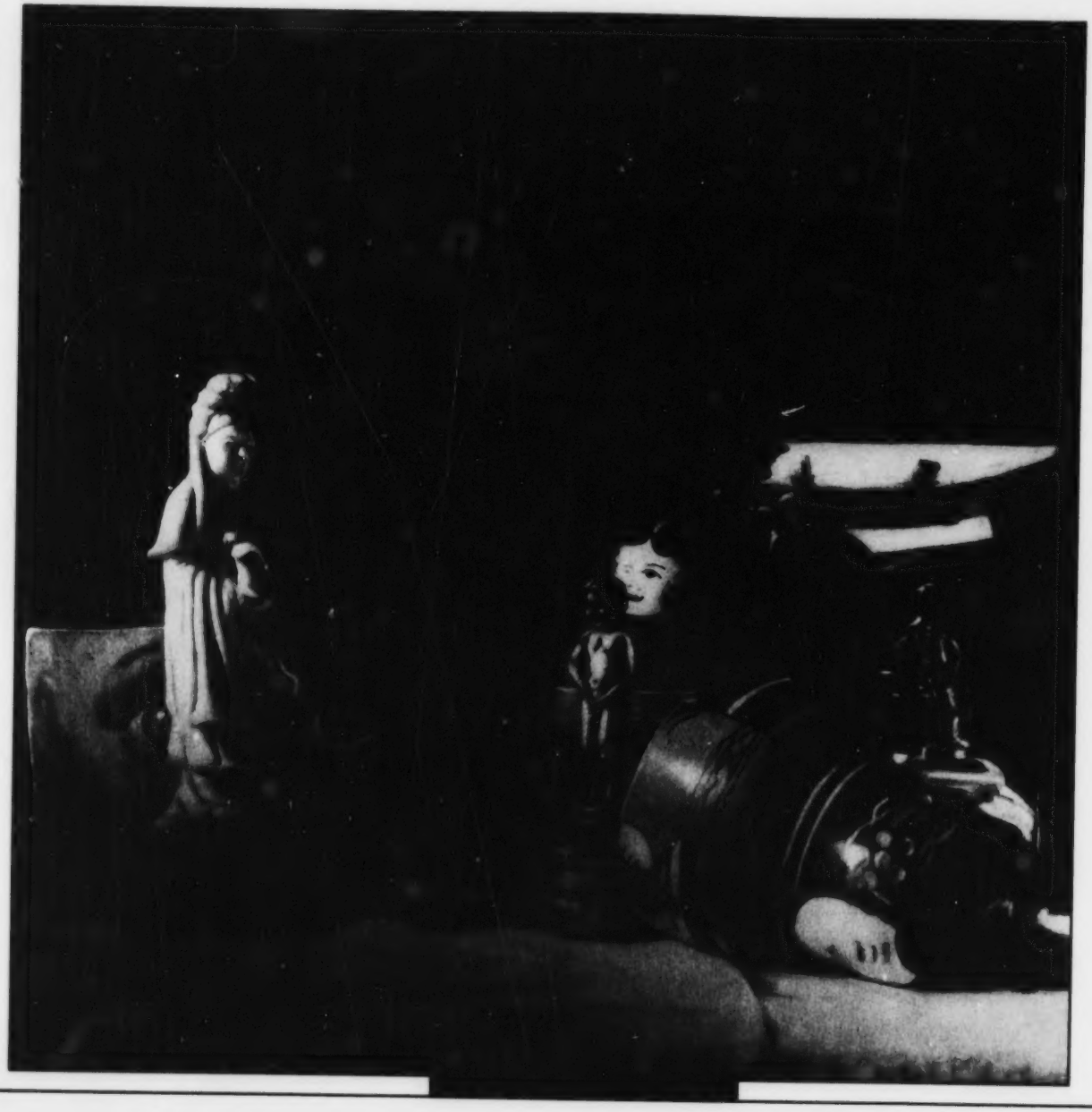
Suffer the little children has a most disturbing subtext, with its allusions to the recent scandals involving the sexual abuse of children within Church-run institutions. The sexy little putto figure, whose naked behind is conveniently reflected in the metal surface of the toaster, suggests a parallel between this fall from grace and our complacent lust for material comforts.

We Three Kings is a pastiche of a Verrocchio devotional painting of the Virgin and Child with attendants. Here one of the attendants has been replaced by a grinning Elvis, while the angel to the left holds a publicity photo of the rock star. The Christ child, third "King" of the title, looks distinctly unsettled by this turn of events. Callaway mocks the popular culture that elevates a dead pop star to semi-divinity, while it reduces the Mother of God, in *Mary-Go-Round*, to a lawn ornament.

DAVID ATKIN

David Atkin
New Yellow Garden
1992
oil on canvas
113.7 x 106.2 cm
Collection of the Artist

MALCOLM CALLAWAY



Malcolm Callaway
Suffer the little children to come unto me ...
1991
oil on canvas
96.5 x 96.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

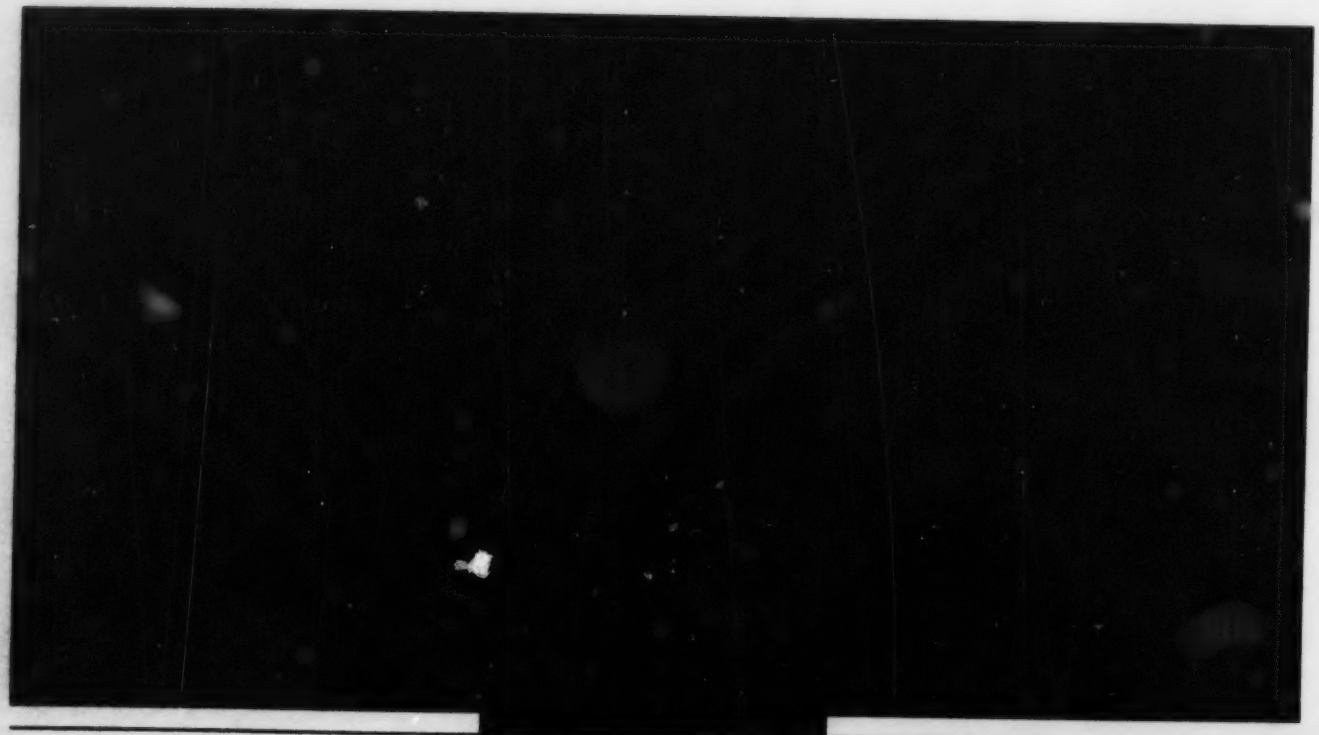
SUSAN TOOKE CRICHTON

Susan Tooke Crichton
Shooting Gallery
1989
acrylic on canvas
99.0 x 96.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

NYNA CROPAS

Nyna Cropas
God and Lucifer Face off in Heaven while the Son of Man Falls All the Way to Earth
1991
acrylic on canvas, wood, paper, aluminum, costume jewellery
260.5 x 293.0 x 246.0 cm
Floor Section:
150.0 x 246.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

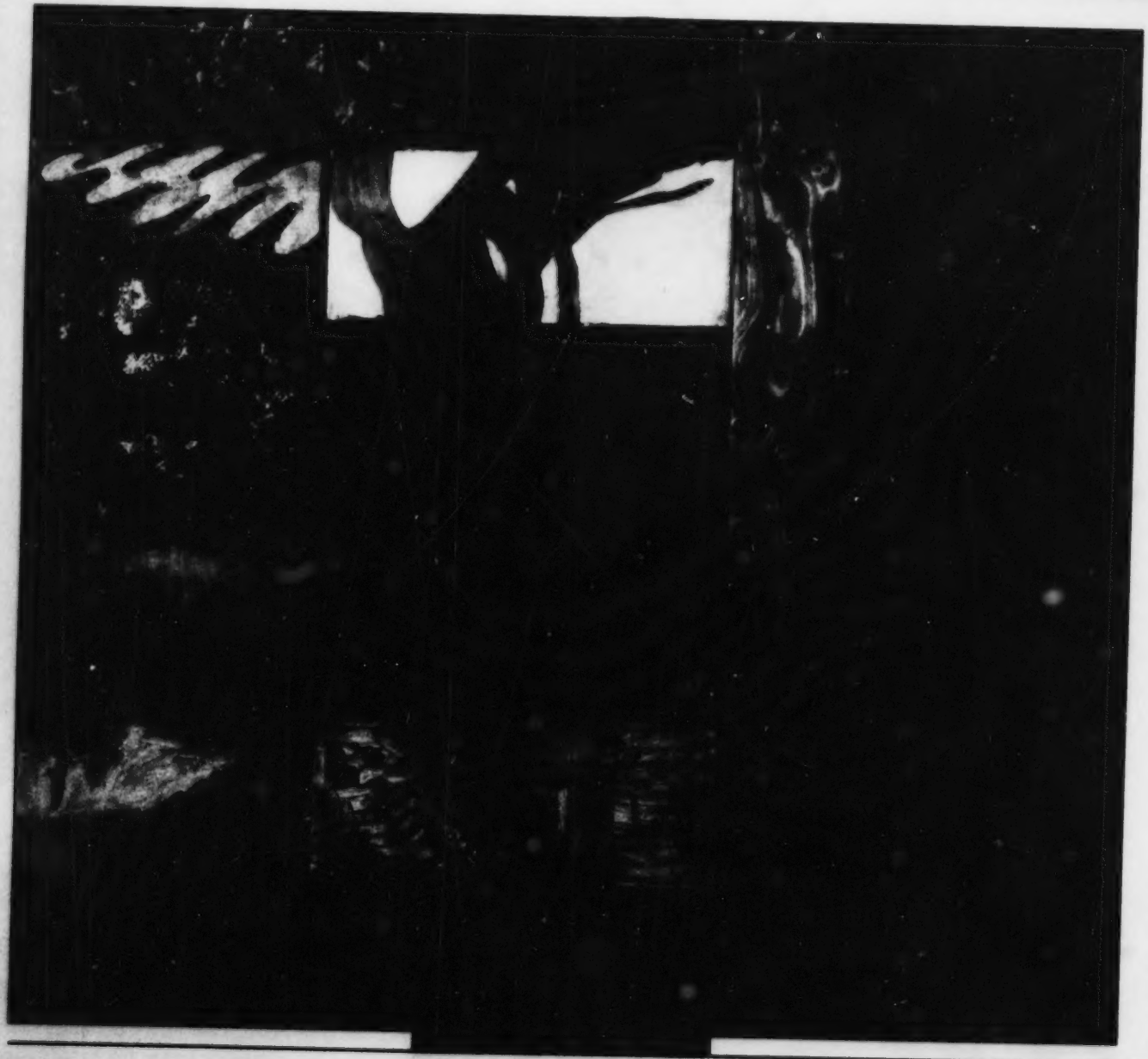
THIERRY DELVA



Thierry Delva
Sticks and Stones
1992
red and grey sandstone,
white limestone, 21 sticks,
individual lengths
30.0 -75.0 cm, thicknesses
4.5 -7.0 cm
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

NANCY EDELL

Nancy Edell
Art Nuns Hiding
1992
oil over acrylic on plywood
with moulding
178.0 x 122.0 cm
hooked rug, 81.0 x 122.0 cm
Collection of the Artist



SUZANNE GAUTHIER

Suzanne Gauthier
Dark Heart
1992
oil, enamel paint, oil pastel, wax on wood
208.0 x 226.0 x 5.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

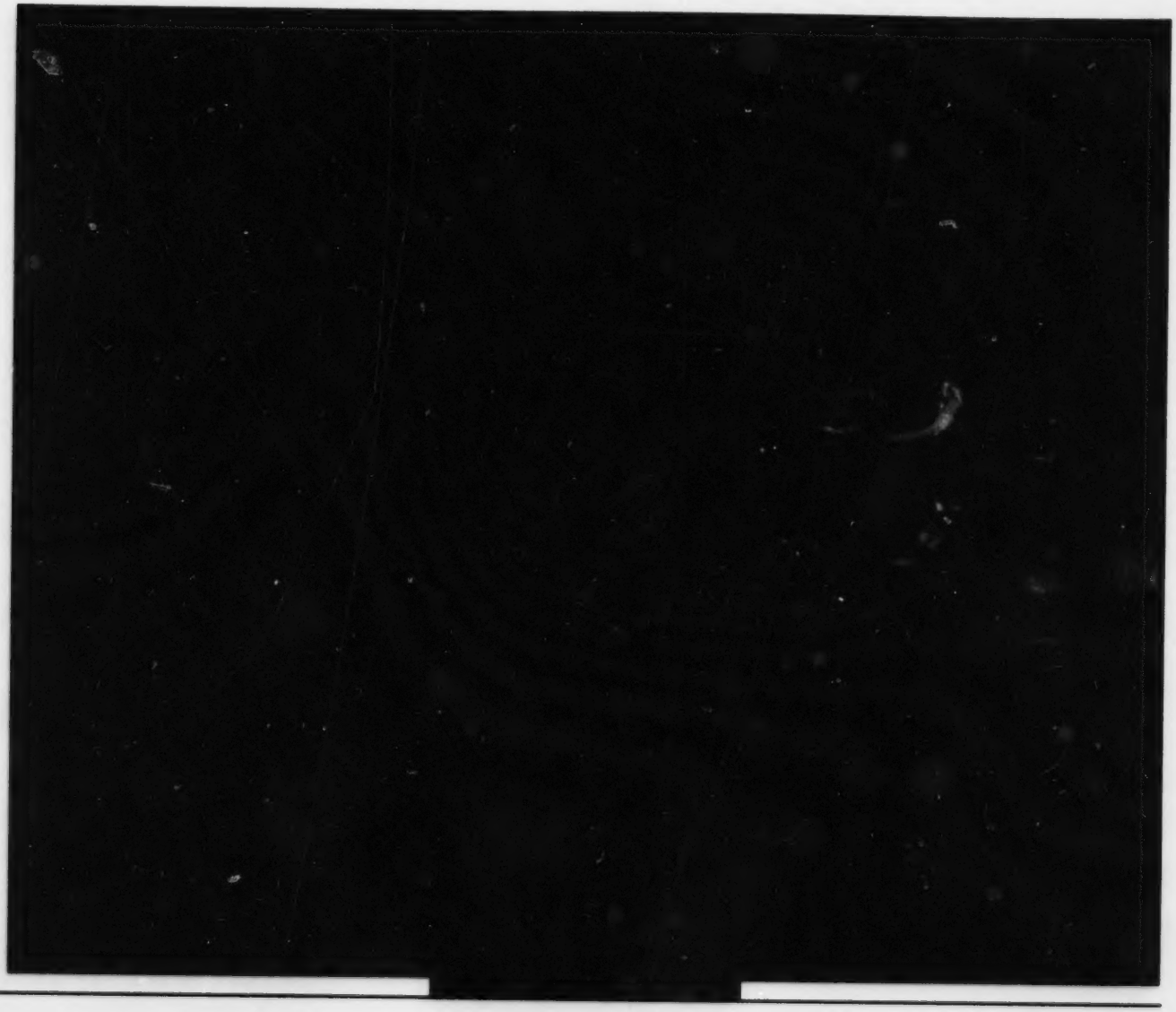
DENNIS GILL

Dennis Gill
Strike
1992
shattered granite headstone,
4 chrome-plated cast-iron
snakes, stone (whole)
66.0 x 51.0 x 15.0 cm
snakes, 91.0 x 5.0 x 2.5 cm,
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

JOHN GREER

John Greer
Gas Jets
1992
red marble, steel
175.0 x 53.0 cm,
127.0 x 53.0 cm
Collection of the Artist
Awakening
1987
basalt, steel, white
Turkish marble
101.6 x 92.7 x 61.6 cm
Collection of the Artist

DAVID HAIGH



David Haigh
Gilgamesh thinks he will live forever
1990
oil on canvas
101.6 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

HARRY HAMM

Harry Hamm
Fall
1989
oil on canvas
121.5 x 111.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

ALEX LIVINGSTON

Alex Livingston
Corn Snake
1991
oil on canvas
121.9 x 182.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

TERESA MacPHEE

Teresa MacPhee
The Receptionists
1992
pigment on cement
11 pieces: 5 standing, each about 180.0 cm high, 6 lying, ranging in length from 90.0-120.0 cm, installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

MARILYN McAVOY

Marilyn McAvoy
Kingmaker
1992
oil on plywood,
122.0 x 167.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

RICHARD MUELLER

Richard Mueller
Syntax: Love Story
1991
glass, metal, wood, straw
18.0 x 142.0 x 7.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

CARL ZIMMERMAN

Carl Zimmerman
The Lark Ascending
1992
cabinet of plywood, pine, plexiglass, varnish and stain, brass screws, coloured pencil on photocopy mounted on cardboard
98.0 x 64.5 x 37.5 cm
Audio soundtrack segment by Ralph Vaughan Williams; 4 stands of 6.0 cm and 3.0 cm diameter maple dowel, wood base, head of laminated plywood, hardboard, plexiglass, varnish and stain, brass screws, coloured pencil on photocopy mounted on cardboard
139.7 x 17.6 x 19.0 cm
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

Callaway's deceptively cheerful images of mass-produced lawn ornaments, with their relentlessly bright colours, throw an unsparing light on their—and our—sentimental racism. These little statues of stereotypical Black men holding lanterns, or of Black women sitting primly on benches, show us in dazzling daylight what many Whites would prefer to leave forgotten in the shadows: our history of racism. One is caught between the seductive materiality of Callaway's garden gnomes and a squirming awareness of how "incorrect", both politically and aesthetically, they are. The guilty pleasure of looking at their luscious surfaces implicates the viewer, not only in racism, but in vulgarity, and requires us to ask ourselves which of these we find more embarrassing.

Callaway, who is not Black, has not attempted to depict Black experience, but to depict the racism that is part of his own cultural heritage. What the White viewer sees is our own shadow projection staring back at us. These are not directly images of Black people, but images of images; representations of representations.

As such, they connect with an ongoing theme of his work, which is to draw attention to the levels of illusion involved in constructing a "realist" image. Even while demonstrating his virtuoso technique, Callaway exposes its artificiality. His 1986 painting, ***Still Life with Realism***, is a *trompe l'oeil* tabletop view of various objects—including a coffee-table book about high realist painting. We see the image of a man at a lunch counter, half obscured by a piece of coral that rests on the book cover. By means of the book title, peaking out from under a seashell, the painting names itself, but it also reminds us that what we are seeing is a painting, not an actual arrrangement of objects. "Ceci n'est pas le réalisme," it seems to say, to paraphrase Magritte.[1] This is not realism, but an intentional construction.

1 René Magritte did several similar works about the nature of representation, one of which showed an image of a pipe, with the words, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe").

WORKS

Suffer the little children to come unto me ..., 1991
oil on canvas
90.5 x 96.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

We Three Kings (after Verrocchio), 1992
oil on canvas
121.9 x 91.4 cm
Collection of the Artist

Mary-Go-Round, 1992
oil on canvas
76.2 x 96.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Painting Day at the Ornament Factory #1, 1990
oil on canvas
91.4 x 76.2 cm
Collection of the Artist

Painting Day at the Ornament Factory #2, 1992
oil on canvas
91.4 x 101.6 cm
Collection of the Artist

SUSAN TOOKE CRICHTON

BORN 1950 Longbranch, New Jersey

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION

1977 Photography & animation, New School for Social Research, New York

1972 BFA Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1987 Gallery 1667, Halifax, Nova Scotia

1983 Dartmouth Heritage Museum, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

1990 *The Planet Earth Exhibition*, Visual Arts Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia

1989 *Mural Artists' Show*, Chemainus Festival of Murals, Chemainus, British Columbia

1986 *Anniversary Show*, Gallery 1667, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED COMMISSIONS

1990 City of Seattle, Washington

1989 Environment Canada

1989 Chemainus Festival of Murals Society

1988 Maritime Broadcasting System, Halifax, Nova Scotia

COLLECTIONS

The Maritime Life Assurance Company

Susan Tooke Crichton is another high realist with an unflinching gaze. It is the gaze of the children in her paintings that one remembers: they are startling in their lack of sentimentality.

A priest is telling a tale in *Children's Story*. The responses of his audience of children range from bored inattention to scepticism. The little girl who stares out at us from the left foreground challenges the fiction that we, the viewers, are all too ready to construct for her. Crichton's children return the viewer's gaze, in a way that is both challenging and questioning. (Often they are, in fact, Crichton's children: the girl in the foreground of *Children's Story* is the artist's daughter, Beth.)

These children assert their own autonomy, and deny the viewer intimate knowledge of themselves. They have a presence and self-possession rarely seen in contemporary images of children.

Among the most directly disturbing of Crichton's works is *Shooting Gallery*, which shows a little boy at an amusement park, in what at first appears to be the process of firing a gun at a young woman. As we decode the image, we see that he is actually aiming at a target in a trophy booth, and that the young woman is the bored attendant. But the wrenching sense of violence persists. The adult male figures lean forward, participating in this trophy hunt, while an older woman bows her head as if in grief, while she searches for change in her purse. The boredom of the young woman reads as resignation to a brutality so prevalent as to be banal.

How can one see this image and not think about the commonplace of domestic violence, or of the Montréal massacre at the École Polytechnique? Or of all the young men cradling plastic guns and waiting for their turn with the target?

Like all Crichton's paintings, this one is based on photographs. There is less assembling of different photos here than in most of her work, but it is instructive to note where she has made selections. She chose to bring into clear focus the red heart-shaped balloon, midway between the woman and the pointed gun, that reads, "I Luv You Very Much". She has cropped out the upper and lower parts of the original source photo, so that the furry legs of the stuffed animals, above, begin to suggest hanging corpses, and so that the metal counter top, instead of terminating neatly, continues towards the viewer, implicating us in the action and removing some of the safety of distance.

Crichton's amusement park images portray the shadow at the heart of the fiction of innocence. They are like a dark tunnel of love carrying us into the underworld. A Medusa's head stares from above the dark portal in *Amusements*, threatening to turn the viewer to stone. Within we can catch glimpses of carousel horses rearing like caged passions, while the boy emerging from this shadowland glances off to our right with a cryptic, questioning look.

WORKS

Shooting Gallery, 1989
acrylic on canvas
99.0 x 96.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Amusements, 1985
acrylic on canvas
122.0 x 91.4 cm
Collection of the Artist

Riddleland, 1992
acrylic on canvas
90.0 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

Children's Story, 1991
acrylic on canvas
68.6 x 166.4 cm
Collection of the Artist

NYNA CROPAS

BORN 1949 Springerville, Arizona

RESIDES Clementsport

EDUCATION
1970 BFA Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1990 St Francis Xavier University Art Gallery, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
1990 New Art Space, Oakville, Ontario
1989 King's Theatre, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia
1989 New Art Space, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 Lyghtesome Gallery, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
1987 Market House Gallery, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia
1986 Fog Forest Gallery, Sackville, New Brunswick

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1990 *Figuratively Speaking*, Market House Gallery, Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia
1986 *Visual Facts*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 *Diverse Perspectives*, The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 *OSA 112th Annual Juried Exhibition*, Toronto, Ontario

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Art Bank

Nyna Cropas paints with the passion and intensity of an Old Testament prophet, drawing on Biblical as well as classical mythological sources.

The large assemblage entitled *God and Lucifer Face off in Heaven while the Son of Man Falls All the Way to Earth* illustrates, in archetypal terms, the moment of the split in Western consciousness: the fission between mind and body, spirit and flesh, subject and matter. The work began as a diptych, two canvases abutting one another, but the force of this split drove a wedge between them, forcing them apart at an angle, from which the Son of Man, in the form of a fish, drops to Earth like a child fallen from its mother's womb. This fall from grace, from the Eden of the undifferentiated self, is the painful birth of consciousness in the first apprehension of good and evil.

God, on the left, glares in His (or Her?) divine fury at the face of Lucifer on the right. As we look closer, however, we see that the face of Lucifer is God's own, reflected in a mirror. This is as direct a representation as one is likely to find of the process of shadow formation: the severing of two aspects of one personality into Good and Evil, with Evil consigned to the dark devouring vortex of the unconscious. Lucifer's name, meaning "fire-bearer", reminds us of that other divine rebel, the Titan Prometheus who defied the Bright Sky Father, Zeus, and stole fire from heaven for the benefit of humankind. The same etymological source gives us the name of Loki, the Norse firegod, another of the ancient Trickster gods of European tradition who have been sent to our collective shadow.

In this work, one figure has separated fully into two warring halves. In many of Cropas's other paintings, the same essential split can be seen *within* one figure, which is often, literally, two-faced. The central figure in *Dreams in the Aviary*, for example, faces both forward, where she gestures towards her mouth as if to eat, and to the side, where we see her in profile, her mouth open in song.

The two faces of *Icarus #5*, with their dark grimaces of pain, reflect the binary structure of the entire image. Icarus falls as he flies, and the contradiction between his struggling horizontal wings and his vertical body, plunging earthwards, is expressed in the form of a crucifixion. Flight, like the double-edged gift of fire, represents that technological mastery over matter that has brought, not a godlike freedom, but a painful division within the self. That his legs end at the knees emphasizes that it is Icarus's loss of connection to the earth that constitutes his tragic flaw and the cause of his downfall.

The separation of the smaller image from its background in *Pastures of Childhood* also dramatizes our alienation from the material world. Here we can identify with the terror of the child, alone in a hostile space.

If a primal splitting of the maternal matter of the universe precedes the birth of consciousness, and the development of technology, then the work of Nyna Cropas calls us to attend to the healing of that split, and to seek reintegration at a higher level so that, rather than falling precipitously from the heaven we have sought to attain, we may live on earth in balance with our own shadow.

WORKS

Icarus #5, 1988
acrylic on canvas
183.0 x 122.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Dreams in the Aviary, 1989
acrylic on canvas
183.0 x 305.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

God and Lucifer Face off in Heaven while the Son of Man Falls All the Way to Earth, 1991
acrylic on canvas, wood, paper, aluminum, costume jewellery
260.5 x 293.0 x 246.0 cm
floor section:
150.0 x 246.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Pastures of Childhood, 1992
acrylic on canvas, iron horseshoe
221.0 x 554.0 x 3.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

THIERRY DELVA

BORN 1955 Deinze, Belgium

RESIDES Prospect

EDUCATION

1990 Journeyman's papers, Restoration Stone Work, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1980 Certificate in Commercial Art, Assiniboine College, Brandon, Manitoba

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990 *Firmly Rooted in Cultivar*, The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1992 *Excursions*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 *Ecphore*, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 *innovascotia*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)
1985 *Thierry Delva, Kim Truchan: Quarry, Sculpture and Drawings*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1984 *Sculpture*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Between 1986 and 1990, Thierry Delva took a detour in his sculpture practice to work for Canstone Inc. in Halifax, obtaining his journeyman's papers in restoration stone masonry. During that period, he worked on the restoration of the façade of Province House and of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. The first body of work Delva produced afterwards was a series of sandstone forms derived from the architectural ornament of the AGNS façade, and exhibited together under the title, *Firmly Rooted in Cultivar*.

The relationship between these works and the AGNS façade is not one of direct quotation, but a mixture of deconstruction and reinvention of the vocabulary of architectural stone ornament. They mediate between the conditions of quotation and representation, between plant and architectural forms: between *representing* ornaments and *being* ornaments in their own right.

In the present installation at the AGNS, Delva's four *Pilasters* abut the grey granite piers that flank the entrance to Gallery 1. One floor directly overhead, a set of four Corinthian half-columns defines the building's main external entrance. The title of Delva's "pilasters" is technically a misnomer, so long as they remain freestanding objects, not set into a wall. They are about the dialogue between object and wall, and the space between, as much as they are about the sumptuous curling stone fronds that Delva has invented, with their allusions to Corinthian acanthus leaves and other ornamental leaf forms.

While Delva's *Column* refers to a whole history of column forms, it has also the freshness of something new, a form in its own right. The base, which is quite heavy for the work's overall proportions, introduces a touch of humour with its inverted Ionic volutes, which not only face the "wrong" way, curling inwards instead of out, but are also at the "wrong" end, forming the base instead of the capital. The slender delicacy of the column itself, however, achieves an elegant coherency, terminating in lovely fern forms that resemble ostrich plumes. In the context of this exhibition, it is easy to see this column, with its four faces acknowledging the four directions, as an *axis mundi*, the world tree or spindle around which the universe turns.

With *Sticks and Stones*, Delva continues to use red and grey Maritime sandstone, with the addition of limestone. These stone logs balance on the borderline between the purity of ideal cylinders and the sinuous, asymmetrical form of actual branches, signified by the minimal suggestion of knots.

In *Column I*, a work from 1985, Delva set a section of birch, complete with bark, inside the negative space of a hollowed wooden post. In the 1986 *Ecphore* exhibition, Delva exhibited it in a corner, adjacent to prints that he produced by inking a piece of plywood, treated with glue to exaggerate the grain. The resulting juxtaposition of wood in four states of processing (raw, milled, plywood, and paper) constituted a poetic meditation on the nature of the material, and the material of nature.

By scattering his *Sticks and Stones* across an area of floor, Delva undercuts our conventional physical relation, and response, to sculpture. Surrounded by these objects, just the right size to load on one's arm, the viewer becomes, imaginatively, a gatherer, participating in the spatial logic of the bonfire. She must define for herself the boundaries between viewer and object, as she picks a path among or around them, or crouches to experience them at their own level.

WORKS

Sticks and Stones, 1992
red and grey sandstone, white limestone
21 sticks, individual lengths
30.0 - 75.0 cm; thicknesses 4.5 - 7.0 cm
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

Column, 1990
sandstone
261.0 x 33.0 x 33.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Pilaster #1, 1990
sandstone
121.0 x 26.0 x 19.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Pilaster #2, 1990
sandstone
121.0 x 28.0 x 15.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Pilaster #3, 1990
sandstone
121.0 x 28.0 x 15.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Pilaster #4, 1990
sandstone
121.0 x 27.5 x 18.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

NANCY EDELL

BORN 1942 Omaha, Nebraska

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION
1969 Filmmaking course, University of Bristol, England
1964 BFA University of Omaha, Nebraska

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1991 *Art Nuns*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (regional travelling exhibition)
1990 *Nancy Edell*, Galerie d'art de l'Université de Moncton, Moncton, New Brunswick
1989 *Fragile Structures*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1988 *Nancy Edell*, University of Nebraska at Omaha Art Gallery, Omaha, Nebraska
1986 *Home Entertainment*, Plug In Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1985 Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1990 *Boston Printmakers 42nd North American Print Exhibition*, Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, Massachusetts
1990 *4th International Biennial Print Exhibition Roc.*, Taipei, Taiwan
1990 *Pictorial Space: New Images in Textiles*, The Museum for Textiles, Toronto, Ontario
1988 *Eighty/Twenty: 100 Years of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)
1987 *Nancy Edell/Vivienne Pearson*, Articule Gallery, Montréal, Québec
1986 *8th International Exhibition of Graphic Art*, Frechen, Germany
1985 *innovascotia*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
Acadia University Art Gallery
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University
Canada Council Art Bank
Dalhousie Art Gallery
Memorial University Art Gallery
Nova Scotia Art Bank
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery
Winnipeg Art Gallery

Nancy Edell's *Art Nuns* series grew out of anxiety about her future, in a society that does not reward the labours of either women or artists with material security. In imagining a place for women artists growing older, Edell has called on the archetype of the nun. It suggests the security and collegiality of a community of women, one that is materially self-sufficient and within which women may exercise some measure of both individual authority and collective autonomy. It conveys the sacredness of making art, and what both habits demand of their initiates: single-minded commitment, renunciation of the presumed emotional security of standard feminine roles, and, of course, the vow of poverty.

As in all her work, Edell has peopled her utopia with the highly articulated contents of her own unconscious. They are such stuff as dreams are made on—and not the sort of dreams one is likely to tell Mother. Images of sexuality, both playful and bestial, intermingle freely with the numinous, the humorous, and the simply cryptic. Although she makes conscious references to visual motifs from other cultures—Assyrian, Mexican, pre-Columbian—the vitality and peculiarity of Edell's figures mark them as the children of her own psyche.

The lower section of *Art Nuns Hiding* shows a basement or underworld space, a sort of ceramic Hell, after Bosch. The kiln or bake-oven suggests the alchemical crucible in which one element transforms into another, and is a frequent motif in the *Art Nuns* series. It features in the production of ceramic babies, the proverbial bun in the oven. This is a place of labour, in several senses of the word. Another kind of underworld imagery appears in *Art Nuns' Reunion*: that of gravedigging and archaeology. The Art Nuns dig in the tough soil for the heroic ancestor figures of women artists and for the secrets of their own hidden memories.

The hooked rug elements of these pieces extend the panels into the world: the world of craft, of dirty boots, of women's work that is never done.

Gender relations inform the very vocabulary of "craft" and "art". Weaving is associated with that female labour that constantly recreates the human world while remaining largely unacknowledged. As she incorporates rughooking, where the image is integral to the material itself, into her art, it is easy to see why Edell has moved away from the painted canvas, whose image obscures the woven fabric that supports it.

Ornamental mouldings give the present paintings the appearance of altarpieces. Edell has placed her hooked rugs in a place where one might wish to kneel, as before a devotional image. While informed by both feminism and the spiritual, however, Edell's art firmly resists a reading in terms of feminist spirituality. Its mode is irony, not piety, whether religious or political. Although they represent human experience in mythic form, her wonderful monsters, at once sacred and profane, do not represent human beings as we might wish to be, but as we are, in all our splendid confusion, and are that much more convincing as archetypes. Complex and contradictory, they are, in the words of the Alice's Looking Glass, precisely "as large as life, and twice as natural. "

WORKS

Art Nuns Hiding, 1992
painting, oil over acrylic on plywood with moulding
178.0 x 122.0 cm
hooked rug
81.0 x 122.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Art Nuns' Reunion, 1992
painting, oil over acrylic on plywood with moulding
144.8 x 119.0 cm
hooked rug
75.0 x 119.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

SUZANNE GAUTHIER

BORN 1948 Lorette, Manitoba

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION

1969 BFA Honours in printmaking, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990 *Axe-Neo 7*, Hull, Québec
1989 Latitude 53, Edmonton, Alberta
1989 Galerie Don Stewart, Montréal, Québec
1988 Plug-In Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1987 Galerie Powerhouse, Montréal, Québec
1986 Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta
1986 Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Ontario
1985 Articule, Montréal, Québec
1985 Le Centre culturel franco-manitobain, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1984 Art Gallery of Brant, Brantford, Ontario

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 *Wild Things*, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba
1990 Print and Drawing Council of Canada, Extension Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1989 Mercer Union, Toronto, Ontario
1987 *Photoperspectives 87*, Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
1986 37th *Salon de la jeune peinture*, Paris, France
1985 *International Exhibition of Ceramic Art*, Faenza, Italy

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Bemis Foundation
Canada Council Art Bank
Kansas City Art Institute
MacDonald Stewart Art Centre
Musée du Québec, Collection Prets d'oeuvres d'art
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery
Winnipeg Art Gallery

Suzanne Gauthier's paintings are assemblages of diverse materials. She practises drawing, painting, photography, and sculpture simultaneously, often with the artist's own work in one medium providing the subject matter, or the material ground, for her work in another. The original sources for many of her images are in ancient representations of mythological and religious subjects.

One such source is the flagellation mural in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii, generally believed to depict initiation rites in the Eleusinian Mysteries. This longlasting cult of the classical world was based on the underworld journey of Demeter in search of her daughter Persephone, and also incorporated elements of Orphic and Dionysian traditions. Another source for Gauthier's work is in classical Hindu images of the god Shiva, considered to have been derived from the same prehistoric source as his Greek equivalent, Dionysos.[1]

As they appear in Gauthier's paintings, however, these images have undergone many generations of re-presentation. Gauthier made a sculptural clay model of an image from the Villa of the Mysteries, and paper silhouettes of its outline, then posed the clay model and the silhouettes, photographed them, and painted on top of the photograph. She also made paper outlines of the dancing Shiva figure, which she then folded, and wire silhouettes, slides of which she projected onto the painting surface. With these as a guide, she created shapes that are suggestive of the original without being a direct transcription.

These actions constitute a multi-layered process of self-reference and self-quotation. They emphasize that what we are seeing has been filtered through the artist's own subjectivity. The surfaces of Gauthier's works tend to be restricted in colour, with black, white, grey, and brown monochromes predominating, and occasional elements of red or blue formica. This general absence of bright colour, the distancing effect of repeated layers of representation, and the avoidance of conventional pictorial logic, render Gauthier's works, at first glance, very cool and remote. Her surfaces, however, are rich and deeply textured, inviting the viewer's gaze to linger and "soak into" the image.

In *Dark Heart*, for example, the right hand panel of the triptych consists of plywood that has been both burned and stained. Along the right hand vertical edge, the artist has painted five images derived from photocopies of a rubber joke-shop skeleton that she made to "dance" on the copying machine. She has rendered them in encaustic, one of Gauthier's characteristic techniques, in which melted wax is the medium for the pigment.

Drawing the figures in white wax, she covered them with black which she then partly scraped away, to reveal the "buried" skeletal figures glowing through the translucent medium. The three skeleton forms along the bottom edge of *Since* have been executed in a similar manner.

As the viewer's attention is absorbed into the porous, allusive, and elusive surfaces of Gauthier's paintings, one finds oneself drawn to the dark heart of a passionate and mysterious subtext. At the same time, the artist makes us aware of the many layers of representation that stand between us and the image's source.

1 Evans, 129 - 135, who cites Alain Daniélou, *Shiva and Dionysos*, trans. K.F. Hurry (London, 1982).

WORKS

Dark Heart, 1992
oil, enamel paint, oil pastel, wax on wood
208.0 x 226.0 x 5.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Untitled, 1992
wax, plaster, enamel paint, graphite on wood, ceramic, photo, roofing material
178.0 x 282.0 x 6.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Since, 1992
wax, enamel, graphite on wood, photograph, floor tile
208.0 x 162.0 x 8.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

DENNIS GILL

BORN 1950 Halifax

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION
1973 Graduate Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Michigan
1972 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1991 *Transition*, Gallery OO, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 *In the Heat of the Moment There Is No Reason*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)
1984 *Lesson Plan*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1984 *In Memorial*, Struts Gallery, Sackville, New Brunswick
1982 *Monkey See*, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1992 *New Brunswick Acquisitions Exhibition*, GAUM, Université de Moncton, Moncton, New Brunswick
1990 Canal Gallery Complex, Montréal, Québec
1984 *3D NB 200*, Restigouche Gallery, Campbellton, New Brunswick (provincial travelling exhibition)
1983 *A Shadow of Our Former Selves*, Struts Gallery, Sackville, New Brunswick

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
Art Gallery of Ontario
Dalhousie Art Gallery
Nova Scotia Art Bank
Owens Art Gallery

Dennis Gill has created several works based on a standard variety of tombstone—a heart shape flanked by a supporting base—produced commercially by Tingley Monuments of Amherst. This shape, however, also resembles a paper valentine. Both objects serve as monuments, but whereas the valentine is given one day and cast into the wastebin the next, the gravemarker is meant to last an eternity. Fickle Eros, it seems, is no match for Thanatos. Yet the shape of the funeral monument reminds us that it, too, is a valentine: an attempt to grant Eros a life beyond death.

Gill has incised the outline of this tombstone/valentine into the slate surface of *And they lived happily ever after*. Over this, the title phrase appears

several times in chalk. The repetition of the text alludes to a famous 1971 work by John Baldessari called *I will not make any more boring art*, an installation in which Gill himself participated as a student. Baldessari's piece became a kind of emblem of the heroic early-1970s period at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, particularly after Bill MacGillivray's 1987 documentary film of the same name. In each work, the artist has repeatedly written out the title phrase in longhand, like a school child doing penance.

In Gill's piece, the penitential text is, paradoxically, an invocation of perfect fulfilment, the standard ending to fairy tales. The notion that anyone lives "happily ever after" in real life is, of course, nonsensical, but the blissful wedding that concludes many fairy tales is a potent symbol of the integration of disparate parts of the self.

Marie-Louise von Franz has also written about the wedding as an emblem of psychological preparation for death.[1] Sculptural couples embrace tenderly on Etruscan and Roman sarcophagi. Just as the union of the parents generates new life, so the union of opposites, which results in their extinction, clears the slate, permitting new forms to arise.

Happily is one of a series of works incorporating rectangular pieces of slate that had once actually served as blackboards. In the classroom, the *tabula rasa* serves as an absence: the negative space in which the positive text can be written. By sandblasting into its surface, however, Gill rediscovers for us the materiality of the slate, its identity as stone. Incised into this positive mass, the image of the tombstone/valentine appears as an absence. Positive text; negative image—but it is the image in its absentness that endures, whereas the chalked text is ephemeral. The artist may write what he wishes, but this "happily every after", like any other, could be erased in a moment. What remains is an ambiguous monument to love and death.

Gill's appropriated blackboards carry the ghosts of all the texts that have already been written on them, and erased. They are imbued with past narratives that can be imagined, but never totally reclaimed.

In a related work called *Delete*, Gill incised the title word into a slate blackboard and wrote a list of other words in chalk. In a response that the artist did not anticipate, but nevertheless welcomed, some gallery visitors deleted some words and added others of their own. The only constant element was the word "delete". Only the process of change is unchanging.

It was a snake who precipitated the underworld journey of Orpheus, when it bit Eurydice and sent her to the world of shades. In the present exhibition, Dennis Gill's *Strike* acts as our guardian of the First Threshold. Some shattering event has broken the artist's stone heart, releasing, in the form of snakes, new forces of life, in all their wonder and terror. "How but through a broken heart", Gill asks in an earlier work, quoting Oscar Wilde, "can God enter?"

1 Marie-Louise von Franz, *On Dreams & Death* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987).

WORKS

The World as We Know It, 1991
sand-blasted granite headstone, paint, 4 cast iron turtles, lifesize in relation to snapping turtles
91.0 x 102.0 x 15.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

And they lived happily ever after, 1984
incised slate, chalk
91.0 x 91.0 x .6 cm
Collection of the Artist

Strike, 1992
shattered granite headstone, 4 chrome-plated cast iron snakes
stone (whole), 66.0 x 51.0 x 15.0 cm
snakes, 91.0 x 5.0 x 2.5 cm each
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

Frontier/Dominion, 1991
aluminum electroplated in brass/copper, steel shelf, galvanized I-beam, etched glass, mirror clips
lifesize heads, each 7.5 cm thick
shelf, 10-gauge steel, 30.5 x 23.0 cm
base, 122.0 x 25.5 x 15.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

JOHN GREER

BORN 1944 Amherst, Nova Scotia

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION

1967 Vancouver School of Art, Vancouver, British Columbia
1966 Montreal Museum School of Art and Design, Montréal, Québec
1964 Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1991 *Civilization*, Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
1990 *Never the Same After Words*, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Reconciliation and Chamber of Desires*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta
1987 *Capacitating*, The Ottawa School of Art Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario
1987 *Connected Works*, The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1987 *Connected Works*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1984 *One of a Number*, The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1982 *Remember-Memory*, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 *The Embodied Viewer*, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta
1990 *Art Contemporain 1990: "Savoir-Vivre, Savoir-Faire, Savoir-Etre"*, Centre international d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, Québec
1988 *Eighty/Twenty: 100 Years of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)
1985 *innovascotia*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)

COMMISSIONS

1988 Parks Canada, The Forks Park, Winnipeg

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Canada Council Art Bank
National Gallery of Canada

John Greer has stated that one of his intentions, in his art, is "to relocate the mind in the body".[1] His sculptural works make the viewer aware of a direct physical relationship with the object, often a field of objects on the floor that require one, literally, to watch one's step.

Lately, he has created several works that refer directly to parts of the body itself. In *Civilization*, a recent installation at Charlottetown's Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Greer arranged thirteen pieces of Carrara marble in the form of giant human bone fragments. Now, in *Muscle*, *Vein*, and *Nerve*, he could be said to be putting flesh on the bone.

Despite the function of the skeleton as a sign of death, Greer's giant bones are more reassuring than these representations of living flesh. Unlike bones, these body parts do not survive death to become objects in themselves. They are not things we expect to *see*. They belong in the dark hidden interior of the body, invisible except in cases of incision, dissection, or catastrophic accident. Displayed, there is something unbearably naked and exposed about them.

That is in their role as *symbols* of the dissected body. At the same time, they function as abstract *signs* of the various ways human beings structure the world outside our bodies. The *Muscle*, fabricated from steel construction rods, generates a metaphor in which buildings, bridges, and dams become athletic gestures, their concrete surfaces a kind of fleshy skin.

The shared form of *Vein* and *Nerve* recalls various other branching systems of transportation and communications. One thinks of plumbing and fibre optic cables. These networks of social commerce, like those of the body, are largely invisible, although we depend on them constantly. If *Civilization* brings to mind the primordial Ur-parents from whose bodies, in many mythologies, the earth was formed, the present works suggest the ways in which human technology has fashioned the world in the image of the human body.

Such technology tends to presume an instrumental relationship with the material world, an objective rationality whose chilling effect is suggested by the cold stone flames of *Gas Jets*. In this installation, they flank the entrance to the inner chamber that houses *Awakening*, like guardians of a bedchamber or of a ceremonial crypt.

Just what is it whose slumber is ending in *Awakening*? A coiled black basalt form lies on a table of white marble and black steel. It could almost be an infant in dark swaddling clothes, except for the sinister little tail curling out one end. It is equally insect pupa, snake, and turd. Whatever it is, we know we don't like it. This is truly a *Disagreeable Object*, in the manner of Giacometti's 1931 phallic sculpture, to which we respond with visceral horror and disgust.

There is an odd angular quality to these tight coils that suggests knuckles: indeed, the whole form, viewed from one angle, resembles a fist. The title calls to mind the lines of W. B. Yeats written in the aftermath of the First World War. Like *The Second Coming*, it evokes a premonitory fear that somehow "centuries of stony sleep / Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle".[2] The funereal slab in this tomb or womb is also an infant's changing table. It is a once dead and newborn, corpse and child. The antiseptic chill of white marble and bare walls suggests an operating theatre, perhaps that of Dr Frankenstein—or Dr Mengele. Just such a combination of Wagnerian drama and crisp technical proficiency characterized the atrocities of Nazism.

"And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"[3]

1 John Greer, Artist's Presentation, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax, 12 November 1990.

2 William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming", 19-20.

3 Ibid, 21-22.

WORKS

Muscle, 1992
welded steel rods, rusted and oiled
15.0 x 305.0 x 20.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Vein, 1992
hollow steel pipe, copper plated
61.0 x 304.8 x 61.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Nerve, 1992
galvanized steel rods
61.0 x 304.8 x 61.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Gas Jets, 1992
red marble, steel
175.0 x 53.0 cm and 127.0 x 53.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Awakening, 1987
basalt, steel, white Turkish marble
101.6 x 92.7 x 61.6 cm
Collection of the Artist

DAVID HAIGH

BORN 1936 Leeds, England

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION
1963 -65 Leeds College of Art, Leeds
1975 -76 Islington Graphic Studios, London

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1990 Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1982 *Suntan Oil and the Products of the Bronze Age*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1990 *Annual Christmas Show*, Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 -90 *Long Live Death (concepts of non-existence)*, Midway Forum Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1988 *Sixth Triennial of Realistic Art*, Sofia, Bulgaria
1987 *14 Contemporary Nova Scotia Painters: Acquisitions 1977-87*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1984 *Slow Painting* (with Kristen Scholfield-Sweet), The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1984 *21 Works from the Canada Council Art Bank*, National Art Centre, Ottawa, Ontario
1984 *10 Nova Scotia Artists*, Albert White Gallery, Toronto, Ontario

COLLECTIONS
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Beaverbrook Art Gallery
Bronfman Collection
Canada Council Art Bank
Nova Scotia Art Bank
Wolfsburg Stadtische Galerie
Swan Hill Regional Gallery of Contemporary Art

To one familiar with David Haigh's work over the previous ten years, the paintings in this exhibition may come as something of a surprise. Haigh's best known works have been realist images drawn from the commonplace experience of middle class life and its environment. Women strolling along a sunlit street in beachwear; the plate glass windows of a supermarket; the cool placid surfaces of a North American bathroom: all are viewed with the emotional detachment of someone simply passing through, like a traveller in an airport lounge. It seems to be always noon in Haigh's domestic and street scenes. There is no evidence of struggling beginnings or of catastrophic ends.

At first glance, therefore, the titles of the *Gilgamesh* series, drawn from ancient Babylonian myth, suggest a radical departure. The Sumerian hero-god who braved the waters of death, and dived to the bottom of the bottomless sea to retrieve the flower of immortality, is not a middle-class Canadian spending a lazy day at the beach.

The *Gilgamesh* paintings, however, demonstrate Haigh's continued interest in fragmented vision, odd viewpoints, and reflecting surfaces that mark the boundaries between different worlds. His earlier paintings (many of them watercolours) often depict scenes with water. *Another Wave* shows the dissolving sheen of a cresting wave about to engulf two bathing-suited figures. In *Shampoo*, the artist contemplates his own feet at the end of a bathtub, as impassively as if they were another element of the bathroom furnishings. Perhaps the most interesting precursor of the *Gilgamesh* series is *Goldfish in a Glass Tank*, which submerges the viewer in an alternative visual universe. We see, from below, the reflective surface of the water; we see distant cloud images both above and below this looking-glass horizon. What we do not see are any references whatever to the tabletop, the room, or the edges of the bowl.

The *Gilgamesh* paintings, similarly, deny us the security of solid boundaries. The colour of the water, and the pretty pastels of the bathing costumes, suggest that this is a suburban swimming pool: but where does it end? How long can these swimmers remain below the surface? Will they—can they—come up for air?

Haigh, born and educated in England, is of the same generation as David Hockney, who also has studied the effects of fragmented vision and has depicted figures submerged in pools. The physical attitudes in *Gilgamesh dives deep beneath Euphrates* and in *Gilgamesh thinks he will live forever* resemble that of the swimmer in Hockney's *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*. Haigh, however, pursues further the visual distortion and disintegration of the figure produced by the refractive and reflective qualities of water.

These images of Gilgamesh diving are seductive, but also hint at the disorientation and transformation that awaits the one who takes the plunge. They balance on the line between representation and abstraction, leaving it open to question whether what the viewer sees is a high-realist rendering of

an actual optical event, or a freely invented pattern of colour and form. They can be apprehended readily on a level of direct representation. At the same time, they invite the viewer to step into depths where the ground may suddenly disappear beneath one's feet.

WORKS

Gilgamesh dives deep beneath Euphrates, 1989
oil on canvas
91.4 x 111.8 cm
Collection of the Artist

Gilgamesh thinks he will live forever, 1990
oil on canvas
101.6 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

Gilgamesh surfacing #2, 1990
oil on canvas
101.6 x 116.8 cm
Collection of the Artist

The Flower of Immortality, 1991
oil on canvas
101.6 x 121.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

HARRY HAMM

BORN 1947 Pressel, Germany

RESIDES Musquodoboit Harbour

EDUCATION
1977 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1983 *Artist-in-Residence*, artist's home, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1976 Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1991 Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

COLLECTIONS
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Art Bank

Harry Hamm has two distinct styles of painting. One is an accomplished high realist technique, with a particular sensitivity to the subtleties of light passing through such refracting media as glass or water. An example of Hamm's virtuosity in this mode is a series of twelve miniature paintings, each four inches square, and each entitled *One of a Dozen Eggs*, that he executed in each of the twelve months of 1983. These are actual-size images of eggs: white or brown or decorated, broken or whole, nestled in a glass under a variety of lighting conditions and against various backdrops. This series exemplifies Hamm's attention to craft, his humour and the intense pleasure he takes in the act of seeing.

The work in the present exhibition represents Hamm's other painterly mode: simplified iconographic images with dark outlines that recall the graphic conventions of printed illustrations. It is a method particularly suited to this *Canadian Sunset* series, which the artist has constructed by assembling visual quotations from the Canadian currency. Together, these images form a humorous and pointed commentary on the present state of the nation, with references to the environment, to Free Trade, and to relations between the state and Native peoples.

The first, and title painting of the series, *Canadian Sunset*, borrows the beaver from the nickel, and the canoe from the former silver dollar coin. The beaver reminds us of that animal's role as the first exchange commodity of Canadian capitalism, and of this country's history as a hinterland for

resource extraction. In its functions as forester and dam builder, it is a potent symbol of the nation's relationship with its environment. The canoe is the vehicle of commodity exchange, a vessel of Native design that was appropriated and used as the means of imperial penetration into the continent. Hamm also addresses Native issues in *Screaming Skies*, with its allusion to low-level Nato training flights over Innu hunting grounds in Labrador.

The second painting in the series, *Fall*, is both a verbal and a visual pun. Hamm's choice of a nonnaturalistic style facilitates a multiple reading of the image. On one level, it allows us to interpret the colour of the maple leaves as a stylized reference to autumn, the season named in the title. On another level, those leaves clearly have the appearance of copper, an effect admirably achieved through a selective application of Hamm's high realist technique. We realize that these leaves have been appropriated from the Canadian penny, and that the sprig that has fallen has done so with an audible clunk. It is the fall of the dollar we begin to consider. Then we notice the smokestacks in the background (from the Tufts Cove thermal generating plant in Dartmouth). The slanting columns of rain against a dark sky evoke thoughts of acid rain.

Hamm has interwoven references to environmental and economic issues with the emblems of national identity. The final image in the series, *Mixed Forest*, presents two trees from very different ecologies, artificially planted in the same environment. Which one, the painting seems to ask, will fare better on this level playing field?

WORK

Canadian Sunset, 1989
oil on canvas
76.5 x 86.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Fall, 1989
oil on canvas
121.5 x 111.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Twilight Looming, 1992
oil on canvas
71.0 x 81.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Screaming Skies, 1992
oil on canvas
117.0 x 213.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Mixed Forest, 1992
oil on canvas
86.5 x 117.3 cm
Collection of the Artist

ALEX LIVINGSTON

BORN 1958 Kingston, Ontario

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION

1983 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1982 Cooper Union, New York

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

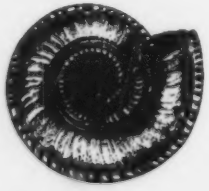
1991 *Recent Paintings*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *Alex Livingston: Recent Paintings and Drawings*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1986 *Vistas*, The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 *Trees*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1983 *Paintings*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1992 *Snakes and Ladders: Recent Paintings by Harlan Johnson, Alex Livingston and Leslie Sasaki*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1991 *Vert*, Studio 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1991 *End of the Millennium: Conflict and Contradiction*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Paintings: Suzanne Gauthier, Alex Livingston and Laura Newman*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *May*, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 *Eastern Perspectives*, Quan-Schieder Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1986 *Visual Facts*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 *innovascotia*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Canada Council Art Bank
Nova Scotia Art Bank



Plant and animal forms have remained at the centre of Alex Livingston's art since he came to maturity as a painter. His best known work, to the general public, is the 1985 painting *Haven*, which was reproduced on the cover of the Nova Scotia telephone directories. It shows a great sheltering tree ringed with hovering and nesting birds.

Livingston's paintings proceeded thence through successive stages of trees, gardens, and flowers. In a series of work exhibited at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in 1989, these flower forms evolved into twining stalks that took on more abstract looping qualities, and opened up into a range of images resembling vascular tubes, coils, worms, snakes, cascading ribbons, spermatozoa, waveforms, and, particularly, the double helix pattern of DNA.

This spiral or helical form is one of the repeating motifs in Livingston's paintings. Indeed, the meandering progress of the work, itself, over time, follows a helical path, continually returning to certain basic themes, but always at a different level.

This process of generating new form is a messy one, producing many layers of images underlying the final one—if indeed any image can be said to be final. An important element in Livingston's work, and one where his influence can be seen in his students, is the presence in finished work of the residue of these earlier forms. At certain points, the paintings may tend to crystallize into clear and definite forms. This is the perigee of a cyclical process, its closest approach to the nameable, and is perhaps the sort of image most likely to appeal to the curator or collector. As soon as the work achieves this condition, however, it begins immediately to return to a more chaotic, and fertile state, one that tends to appeal more to fellow artists, who like to see the creative process itself made visible. There is a constant rhythmic alternation between resolved and unresolved form, order and chaos.

The specificity, or lack thereof, of Livingston's plant and animal forms partakes of this alternation between clear and unclear, conscious and intuitive. His plants are often not depictions of specific real world species, but freely invented expressions of the biological will to be. They have an ornamental quality, like decorated cult objects retrieved from Celtic or Scythian mounds. His animals, on the other hand, are more closely based on actual models from specific visual references.

The aura, or halo, is another recurring pattern: a manifestation of life energy or a protective shell around the living form. In *Radiant Flower* and a similar, untitled painting of three flower forms, these auras have developed into strongly articulated, spiky outer cases, rather like seed pods split open. They reveal the mature plant that is implicit within the germ embryo. In another untitled canvas, the aura takes the form of a wavy envelope of shimmering coloured veils, a kind of energy field or radiation emanating from the plant itself.

The aura takes another form again in *Corn Snake*, where it is a black outline defining the warm nest where life lies coiled, like DNA in the nucleus of a cell. The silhouettes of creatures appear as protrusions from this outline, suggesting that the shell forms a cosmos, the outer surface of the living world, populated by the fecund procreative power that the snake represents. In a similar way, a Polynesian statue from the Tubuai Islands shows lesser gods and human beings appearing on the body of the supreme god, Tangaroa.[1] That mythological tradition, like many others, describes the world as emerging from a cosmic egg[2], a concept obviously related to Livingston's shell and aura motifs.

1 Larousse, 455, and Campbell, plate XX.
2 Campbell, 276-277.

WORKS

Radiant Flower, 1991
oil on canvas
81.0 x 61.0 cm
Collection of the Nova Scotia Art Bank

Untitled, 1991
oil on canvas
81.0 x 61.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Untitled, 1991
oil on canvas
81.0 x 61.0 cm
Collection of Fred and Susan Holtz, Ferguson's Cove, Nova Scotia

Corn Snake, 1991
oil on canvas
121.9 x 182.9 cm
Collection of the Artist

Snakes, 1992
oil on canvas
139.7 x 177.8 cm
Collection of the Artist

Teresa MacPHEE

BORN 1962 Truro, Nova Scotia

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION
1990 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1991 *Mother May I?*, The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Elitekey*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *How the West Was Won*, Other Art, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1991 *Neo-Nativists*, Pitt International Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
1991 *First Nations Art*, Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford, Ontario
1990 *Art Against Violence Against Women*, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Four Days Four New Directions*, 56 Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
1990 *StreetsmArt*, Gottingen Street area, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *International Group Exhibit*, La Galerie Nationale, Tunisia

COLLECTIONS
The Confederacy of Mainland Micmacs
The Micmac Association of Cultural Studies
Micmac Family and Children's Services
The Multi-Cultural Association of Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Museum

Teresa MacPhee's outdoor sculptural installation, *The Receptionists*, derives its form from the carved bone pendants found in Beothuk gravesites. The original "red Indians", so-called because they smudged themselves with red ochre, the Beothuk once inhabited the island of Newfoundland and were presumed to have been hunted to extinction in the nineteenth century.[1]

For me, as a ten year old living in St John's in 1964, the most memorable displays in the Newfoundland Museum were the human remains of two Beothuk: a mummified infant and the ochre-dusted skeleton of an adult. It says something about museums, and the dominant culture's attitude towards Native peoples, that they would be removed from their resting places and displayed like specimens in trophy cases.

In 1992, on the five hundredth anniversary of the European invasion of the Americas, this is the first exhibition installation in the forecourt of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. It is a very political context: on the threshold of the province's premier art institution, flanked by federal and provincial office buildings, and ringed by bank towers. From the corner of the legislature across the street, a cannon aims directly into the heart of the forecourt. Like a smaller Stonehenge, the standing figures form a protective circle around their reclining companions, and constitute a powerful expression of endurance, defiance, and reclamation.

No one can now know what the pendants meant or represented. MacPhee, who is of Micmac and Scottish descent, draws on her knowledge of other Native traditions to read these objects as "spirit walkers", human and animal forms used by shamans to help people pass between two worlds, by means of the holes drilled through them. Their forms, according to MacPhee, also derive from the shapes of finger bones and bearclaws.

The process of healing any culture, whether Native or European in origin, involves a combination of careful research, guesswork, and creative invention. MacPhee has spoken of "making up" her own myths.[2] In many of her works, such as *Waltes Game* and *The Spirit Swings*, she has shown a willingness to combine the playful and the sacred. In *The Receptionists*, she freely incorporates motifs from non-Beothuk sources. Several of the notched and pointed forms that lie together in the middle of the installation are modelled on "moon counters", a device whereby women keep track of their menstrual cycles.

In choosing cement as a medium, MacPhee acknowledges that she is creating an object in the present, and distances herself from the notion of authenticity. She has written, about her use of cement in another installation, that "the viewer is confronted with manufactured materials in order to regard this mythology in contemporary terms rather than as archaeological evidence."[3] Rather than follow the practice of isolating and preserving objects in museums, MacPhee has considered installing *The Receptionists* in a wooded area on Micmac land. There they would be allowed to deteriorate naturally, the cement flesh crumbling away to expose the skeletal framework of steel.

MacPhee's other works in this exhibition, *Turtle* and *World*, allude to the Micmac creation myth, in which the earth is borne on the back of a turtle. They call on the viewer to pay attention to the ground on which he walks.

Like any artist from a marginalized community, MacPhee must struggle with the tensions that arise from being perceived as a spokesperson for that community. The desire is always there to avoid specific Native references, to shake off the constraining label of "Native woman artist". However, like all artists—including White male artists—MacPhee makes her art from where she lives. It's just that some of us, more than others, are also obliged to defend that place.

1 Although the Beothuk are officially considered extinct, oral tradition among the Micmac in Cape Breton, according to MacPhee, records that some escaped genocide by means of a harrowing sea journey. These settled among the Micmac, where knowledge of Beothuk descent was passed on, within families, into the present. These Beothuk learned to assimilate and, in MacPhee's words, "do the white thing." From a conversation with the artist, 22 January 1992. Quotation from an unpublished manuscript by the artist, undated, unpaginated.

2 Conversation with the artist, 10 September 1991.

3 *Mother May I? An Installation by Teresa MacPhee* (Halifax: The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, 1991), unpaginated.

WORKS

The Receptionists, 1992
pigment on cement
11 pieces: 5 standing, each about 180.0 cm high, 6 lying, ranging in length from 90.0 - 120.0 cm
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

Turtle, 1990
Cape Breton marble
34.0 x 120.0 x 60.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

World, 1990
Cape Breton marble
40.0 x 40.0 x 40.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Marilyn McAVOY

BORN 1959 St Catharines, Ontario

RESIDES Halifax

EDUCATION
1984 BFA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1981 BA University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1990 Studio 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1988 *Urban Nature*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1982 *Prints and Drawings*, La Grande Maison, Caraquet, New Brunswick

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1991 *Necessary Space*, The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Survival at the Water's Edge*, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1988 *4 Painters*, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 *Ecpbore '87*, Bryant Building, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 *innovascotia*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia (national travelling exhibition)
1984 *Prints*, Manuge Galleries, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1984 *Annual Dogwood Festival*, Technical University Art Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University
Canada Council Art Bank
Nova Scotia Art Bank

The images in Marilyn McAvoy's most recent series of paintings are derived from a collection of toys she acquired from gumball machines as a child. Some appear directly in the paintings. Some undergo alterations and transformations, often beyond recognition. Still other forms are pure invention, resulting from intuitive responses to the toys—their forms, functions, and emotional associations—and to the process of painting itself.

To look at five slides of what eventually became *Red Rover*, at successive stages of development, is to look at five different paintings, any one of which might seem worthy of exhibition. The artist, however, obeying her own internal logic, reworks the image until satisfied that some problem intrinsic to it, and her relationship with it, has been resolved.

The small red doll's teacup in *Fortress* first appeared as a dominant central image in the painting that became *Kingmaker*. It migrated thence to *Red Rover*, where it became a doubled, mirrored image of two cups, before vanishing from both paintings and settling at last on the periphery of the third.

Each of these paintings recounts a history of the struggle that went into its own creation. The residue of earlier forms is a powerful element in each composition. The coil spring in the lower left of *Kingmaker*, for example, is highlighted by a dark, ragged outline surviving from an earlier background colour. This relationship is analogous to the way that past memory, even when forgotten, continues to define present experience. The same plum-coloured background forms the substance of the crown-like form that gives the painting its title. Alternating positive and negative space, McAvoy makes what was once background into figure, isolating a fragment of it and giving it form by overlaying and framing it with a new colour that then becomes the new ground.

The titles of these works, referring to children's games, allude to that lost continent, the landscape of childhood experience that lies submerged in the unconscious of every adult. How quickly we have forgotten the intricate and precise rules of these games, once so familiar and firmly grasped! It is as if there were a protective shield of forgetfulness, a river Lethe, separating childhood from adulthood, ensuring that the grown-up world remains only imperfectly aware of what goes on among children. McAvoy's gumball paintings are an exercise in intuitive memory, retrieving some residue of the childhood experience by entering into a childlike state of playful invention and association.

This is no sentimental fantasy of childhood, but a strongly and darkly coloured world of vivid passions, desires, and fears. The titles refer to power, defense, domination; the highly structured culture of signs that children construct and maintain, with its elaborate hierarchies. What was originally a basketball player in *British Bulldog* becomes a soldier with a flamethrower. A cartoon terrorist bomb hangs like a dark plum below the paper airplane in *Kingmaker*.

The basketlike forms in *Red Rover* recall McAvoy's previous series of paintings, based on whalebone corsets and stays. While those images lend themselves to a feminist reading, as a critique of the ways in which women's bodies have been contained and distorted, and their power stayed, the artist has said that her organizing principle related less to the political meanings of objects than to their formal properties: her intuitive affinity for certain forms and the visual rhymes between them.[1] This in no way contradicts or disallows a feminist analysis, but illustrates how there is more than one path to a body of knowledge, and that many pass by way of the unconscious.

1 Conversation with the artist, 3 October 1991.

WORKS

Red Rover, 1992
oil on plywood
122.0 x 167.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Kingmaker, 1992
oil on plywood
122.0 x 167.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

British Bulldog, 1992
oil on plywood
122.0 x 167.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Fortress, 1992
oil on plywood
122.0 x 167.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

RICHARD MUELLER

BORN 1944 Kenmore, New York

RESIDES Portuguese Cove

EDUCATION

1992 MA Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1975 BEd St Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
1970 Graduate Studies in Filmmaking, State University of New York/Eastman House, Rochester, New York
1969 BFA Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland
1967 State University of New York, Buffalo, New York

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1991 *Truth and Other Fictions*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Richard Mueller: Works*, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, New Brunswick (regional travelling exhibition)
1989 *Columns*, Quigley Art Gallery, Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa
1987 *Small Columns: Small Works*, Soho Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1983 *Percepts*, University College of Cape Breton Art Gallery, Sydney, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1992 *Extremes*, Studio 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1991 *End of Millenium: Conflict and Contradiction*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 *Three*, York University, Toronto, Ontario
1990 *Vision Interface*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *Three*, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *Long Live Death*, Midway Forum, Toronto, Ontario
1988 *Mythical Monuments*, Eastern Edge, St John's, Newfoundland
1988 *Eastern Perspectives*, Quan-Schieder Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1986 *Visual Facts*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia

COMMISSIONS

1991 Teleglobe Canada

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of Hamilton
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Canada Council Art Bank
Fortress Louisbourg, National Historic Park
Nova Scotia Art Bank
Nova Scotia Sport Heritage Museum
University College of Cape Breton Art Gallery

Many of Richard Mueller's recent works take the form of long narrow wall-mounted constructions, in steel, glass, and other materials, that extend horizontally like rails or beams. The extreme linearity of this format echoes the linear quality of written language, and Mueller has grouped several of these works under the series title, *Syntax*. They encourage the viewer to attempt to read them, to decipher a syntactical relationship between the assembled elements.

The notion that these works are made up of discrete parts, each constituting a unit of meaning, is supported by the explicit way these parts are assembled, with the visible hardware of nuts and bolts. There is a sturdy Meccano set feeling to these pieces, emphasized by the use of perforated steel. Whatever meaning or narrative is being presented, one is made aware of the fact that it is a constructed one.

If these are linguistic signs, however, they frustrate any desire to assign them clear meanings. Something is being withheld. Typically, Mueller's most directly representational elements—the Eros in *Syntax: Love Story*, the painted firebox image in *Syntax: Firebox*—are masked, screened, obscured by intervening materials such as perforated steel or reed glass. Several of Mueller's *Syntax* works have apertures opening into inaccessible interior spaces. The presence of so many boxes and chambers gives these constructions a distinctly architectural quality—perhaps not surprising, considering that Mueller teaches Communications and Design in the Faculty of Architecture at the Technical University of Nova Scotia. He has also worked as a theatrical stage manager, and it is ultimately as tiny theatres that these works engage the viewer. In trying to discern their meaning, we imagine ourselves into them, through the screens and viewholes, seeking the hidden "discovery space" for the resolution of this narrative drama.

We use screens to project images, and we use them to hide things. In this century, the cinema is the privileged medium for theatrical narrative. The title of Mueller's largest piece in this exhibition makes it clear that "*This is no ordinary movie ...* ". A hand-coloured photocopy of a photographic image shows a group of people in relaxed attitudes, leaning back in armchairs, apparently an audience watching a film. The special eyeglasses they all wear suggest that this one of those gimmicky 1950s 3-D movies, perhaps a Japanese horror film whose mainstay is the ostentatious destruction of a cardboard city.

In fact, this is a group of American scientific and military officials, witnessing a nuclear test. At the lefthand end of this construction, Mueller has secured a rectangle of thick felt with bolts, to create a tufted surface. It suggests insulation, protection, control: the security and confinement of the padded cell. The most tactile and organic material elements in these constructions are all compressed or contained, as if crushed by a rational machine. As in Mueller's earlier series of *Fireboxes*—half-sculptures, half-paintings that placed pigment on a constructed sheet metal ground—one of the central concerns here is the way that technology has mediated between us and the material world.

At the midpoint of "*This is no ordinary movie ...*" is a charred model house, like the little paper buildings Americans ignite with firecrackers on the fourth of July—or like the stick structures one sees in film documentation from early nuclear tests, being blown apart by the force of the blast. The audience seems to be enjoying this spectacle, as if indeed all that was happening here were special effects. With our historical hindsight, we know just what this drama entailed, however, and that the stage on which it was performed was more than a paper set.

WORKS

"*This is no ordinary movie ...*", 1991
oil on metal, glass, felt, steel, wood
8.0 x 520.0 x 8.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Syntax: Love Story, 1991
glass, metal, wood, straw
18.0 x 142.0 x 7.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Syntax: Firebox, 1991
glass, metal, oil on wood, moss
7.5 x 114.0 x 7.5 cm
Collection of the Artist

Red Construct #1, 1991
oil on wood, perforated steel, felt
51.0 x 51.0 x 8.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

Red Construct #2, 1991
oil on wood, perforated steel, oil on photocopy
51.0 x 51.0 x 8.0 cm
Collection of the Artist

CARL ZIMMERMAN

BORN 1951 Hamilton, Ontario

RESIDES Orangedale, Cape Breton

EDUCATION

1972 McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario
1971 Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1992 *The Lark Ascending*, 00 Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1991 *The Calm Sea*, Artefect Gallery, Toronto, Ontario
1991 *Beside Still Water*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1990 The Photo Gallery, Nova Scotia Photo Co-op, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 Studio 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1987 St Francis Xavier University Art Gallery, Antigonish, Nova Scotia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1991 *Greater than the Sum*, University College of Cape Breton Art Gallery, Sydney, Nova Scotia
1991 *Art Pro '91*, Studio 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1989 *Cape Breton Artists*, Northwestern State University Art Gallery, Natchitoches, Louisiana
1988 Other Art, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1988 *Inverness County Arts Council Exhibition*, Marble Mountain and Port Hood Island, Nova Scotia
1986 *Visual Art Exhibit*, Foreign Ministers' Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 Gallery 1667, Halifax, Nova Scotia
1985 Yaneff Gallery, Toronto, Ontario

COMMISSIONS

Nova Scotia Sport Medicine Institute, Halifax

COLLECTIONS

Canada Council Art Bank
Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum
Nova Scotia Art Bank

In his sculptural installations, Carl Zimmerman applies the streamform design conventions of 1930s and 1940s industrial design. With their portholes, grille motifs, and rounded corners, his freestanding and wall-hung objects employ the same design vocabulary as such exemplary objects of that period as hydroelectric dams and ocean liners.

It was a period when massive industrial engineering projects served as emblems of even vaster projects of social engineering, attempts to remake the world both physically and culturally. Three models of social organization competed for hegemony: a fascist model in Italy, Germany, and Japan, a Stalinist model in the Soviet Union, and a social democratic model in the New Deal of American president Roosevelt. What all three models shared, besides a common visual style, was an interest in extending and intensifying state power as an instrument of control. All three represented the utopian ideology of our century, a belief in collective salvation through technological mastery and centralized social control: the society as corporation.

In his earlier works, Zimmerman copied the forms of heavy industrial projects and transportation, employing images of water and air to refer to elemental forces harnessed by technology. Here one of those images, a view of clouds, takes on the emotional colouring of private fantasy. The design elements of *The Lark Ascending* are consistent with Zimmerman's earlier work, but allude now to the technology of broadcasting: to the role of propaganda and the media in advancing the social agenda by shaping the individual imagination.

The surfaces of these objects, resembling both woodgrain and Bakelite, locate them in the realm of domestic furnishings, particularly electrical appliances. The individual porthole stands allude to microphones, pistons, and periscopes. We can imagine ourselves on the viewing platform of a Zeppelin, suspended among the clouds. The broadcast imaginatively transports the listener (and, later, the viewer). The dial-like porthole in the sound cabinet prefigures the tiny round screens of the first television sets.

The sound component of this work is an excerpt from a composition by Ralph Vaughan Williams, which gives the installation its title. It belongs to the same musical family as motion picture soundtracks of the period. Such visual and aural quotations would normally invoke a nostalgic response, but Zimmerman denies us any sense of reassurance. The tape is a fragmentary loop that holds us in an uneasy stasis: the dimly lit installation space is at once ominous and funereal. These particular "good old days", we should remember, corresponded with the rise of totalitarianism.

Zimmerman's work is an example of installation work that partakes of sculptural qualities. He has made the frame and the plinth, technical supports to which the viewer usually does not pay conscious attention, the main subject of his work. It is the design and construction of the cabinet and stands themselves that holds our attention. We don't know quite how to take them: they seem to exist as presentation devises for the photocopied images and the recorded sound, yet they are so strongly articulated, so much things in themselves. Zimmerman draws our attention to structures that surround us and profoundly shape our perceptions, yet which we normally take for granted. The conventions of industrial design, and the ideology they embody, serve to frame our understanding of our place in history and in the world.

WORKS

The Lark Ascending, 1992
cabinet of plywood, pine, plexiglass, varnish & stain, brass screws, coloured pencil on photocopy mounted on cardboard
98.0 x 64.5 x 37.5 cm
audio soundtrack segment of *The Lark Ascending* by Ralph Vaughan Williams
4 stands of 6.0 cm diameter and 3.0 cm diameter maple dowel, 19.0 cm diameter wood base, head of laminated plywood, hardboard, plexiglass, varnish & stain, brass screws, coloured pencil on photocopy mounted on cardboard, 19.0 cm diameter x 18.0 cm
installation dimensions vary
Collection of the Artist

Bibliography

Bly, Robert. *A Little Book on the Human Shadow*. Ed. William Booth. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.
Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Bollingen Series XVII. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
Evans, Arthur. *The God of Ecstacy: Sex-Roles and the Madness of Dionysos*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1988.
Fordham, Frieda. *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*. rev. ed. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963.
Foster, Hal. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983.
von Franz, Marie-Louise. *Individuation in Fairy Tales*. rev. ed. Boston: Shambhala, 1991.
----, *On Dreams & Death*. Boston: Shambhala, 1987.
Hertz, Richard. *Theories of Contemporary Art*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985.
Jaynes, Julian. *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982.
Jung, Carl Gustav. *Man and His Symbols*. 1964. reprint. New York: Anchor Press, 1988.
Lord, Barry. *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a people's art*. Toronto: NC Press, 1974.
Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. New York: Vintage Books, 1962.
Monick, Eugene. *Phallos: Sacred Image of the Masculine*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1987.
New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology. London: Prometheus Press, 1968.
Peck, Robin. "Sculpture and the Sculptural in Halifax and Vancouver." MS, 1991.
Shuebrook, Ron. "The Persistence of Representation: Some Issues, Some Identities." *ArtsAtlantic* 15 (Fall 1982): 20-26.
Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation*. 1966. reprint. New York: Delta, 1979.

About the Curator

Robin Metcalfe was born in Chester, Nova Scotia, in 1954. He studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and graduated with a BA Honours from Dalhousie University in 1980. He has worked as a railway porter, freelance writer, editor, critic, and curator. His writing has been published in more than fifty periodicals, in Canada, the United States, Britian, Australia, and Sweden, and has been included in several anthologies. In 1984, he received first prize for adult poetry in the annual literary competition of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. One of his poems is included in *Themes for All Times*, an English anthology for use in Newfoundland and Labrador high schools.

This is the second exhibition at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia for which he has served as guest curator. The first was *Alex Livingston: Recent Paintings and Drawings*, in 1989. He has also acted as curator or co-curator of exhibitions at the Mary E. Black Gallery and the Centre for Art Tapes, and has written catalogue essays for exhibitions at the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, The Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University, and for the 7th Wave Seminar (film and video). His critical writing appears frequently in *ArtsAtlantic*, and has also appeared in *Border/Lines*, *Canadian Art*, *Ceramics Monthly*, *Contact*, *Fusion*, *Metalsmith*, *Parallelogramme*, and *Vanguard*.

In 1992, The Canada Council awarded Mr Metcalfe a Non-Fiction Writing Grant to produce a book of essays on the politics of the gay male body, the project in which he is currently engaged